MIIA Risk Management

School Facilities Protection Best Practices Before and During a Winter Closure

Property claims during school closures continue to occur with concerning frequency throughout the MIIA program. The following have been identified as best practices to prevent property claims during winter school closures. Typical sources of loss during winter closures are frozen and burst pipes; improperly working univents; mechanical failure of circulator pumps, boilers and sump pumps; corrosion or other failure of water feed connections.

See MIIA Rewards criteria and submission checklist as you may be eligible for Reward credit.

Best Practice Items

☐ **Heat Setbacks:** Set heat setbacks to an appropriate level to prevent freezing. This could vary by zone depending on your building, insulation levels, air circulation, number of heating vents/radiators, etc. Generally, 55-58 degrees would be acceptable. Vestibules and cold spots may need to be set higher or have supplemental (and safe) heat sources brought in. Do not add additional trip or electrical hazards with supplemental heat.

☐ **Doors and Windows:** Properly close and secure all doors and windows. This is especially important for all exterior doors and windows and for fire doors. Some interior doors may be left open if it helps circulate heat into un-heated areas. These areas should be documented on a building closure plan to ensure everyone is aware of which doors are to remain open and which are required to be closed.

☐ **Staff Walkthroughs:** Prepare a plan to have staff perform regular walk throughs during the closure period. These should be full walkthroughs through every part of the building looking for signs of damage or cold areas. Check univents to make sure they are properly closing and opening. A Thermographic camera can be useful to see how cold the area around a univent may be.

- Provide the staff with a list/ map of key shut-offs such as water lines/ mains and gas.
- Provide the staff copies of your building response plans with key vendors and contacts.

☐ **Water Line Inspections:** Do an inspection of water connections: sinks, toilets, water heaters, refrigerator lines, water fountain lines, washing machines. Consider shutting water down from non-essential areas if feasible until normal activities resume. (note some water lines must be drained after being shut down) Look for loose, corroded, frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged connections and replace prior to shut-down. (See the Water Loss by Mechanical Failure Prevention Program for more detailed water connection inspection information and rewards opportunities)

☐ **Sump Pumps:** Test sump pumps. Pour approximately five gallons of water into the pump and watch the float valve rise. As the float valve rises, the pump should turn on and the water should discharge through the outlet pipe. Go outside and inspect the outlet pipe; water should be flowing from the pipe and away from the building.

☐ **Remote Sensor Technology:** If you have remote detection (temperature, water sensors) ensure devices have a full battery charge and that alert numbers and emails are up to date and people on the lists understand their duties should they receive an alert.