



**M**ark Twain said, “Climate is what we expect, weather is what we get.” This statement stills holds true today. Weather affects sports turf managers livelihood weekly, daily and sometimes hourly. How many times have you thought over and over about the weather? Is global warming alive and well? Could it be true? Who knows? Let the meteorologists and environmentalists argue that point and case. This is what we do know, with the recent tornado events from May and June 2013 in Oklahoma, about 40 people have lost their lives; that’s worrisome enough. However, looking back at 2012, I was taken back on how much the weather has impacted our livelihood in such big ways. From California and the Dakotas and east to Indiana and Illinois, at least 123 deaths were associated with excess heat and \$35 billion primarily in crop losses were a result from record drought.

The western wildfires that burned over 9 million acres across the United States resulted in eight deaths and cost over \$908 million in damages. Super Storm Sandy and Hurricane Isaac contributed to 182 deaths and cost more than \$64 billion.

The term Derecho refers to fast moving storms that are long-lived and wide-spread wind storms that can exceed hurricane force winds typical of most hurricanes. Last year when this type of weather system went through the Midwest to

the Mid-Atlantic, it was responsible for more than 20 deaths and millions of dollars in property damage.

Last but not least, there were 939 tornadoes last year which cause 70 deaths and over 1.6 billion dollars in property and crop loss.

These facts are stunning and a little bit scary, but how can we prepare ourselves from such mayhem. Being prepared is only half the battle; predicting the unpredictable is the second half. To start you need to develop a plan, a checklist, for every department of your facility. You also need to conduct round-table discussions with appropriate representation from critical areas such as: the general manager, security, the sports turf manager, the housekeeping manager, public relations, human resources, IT, local fire and police departments etc.

Planning: (Before the Storm-Checklist)

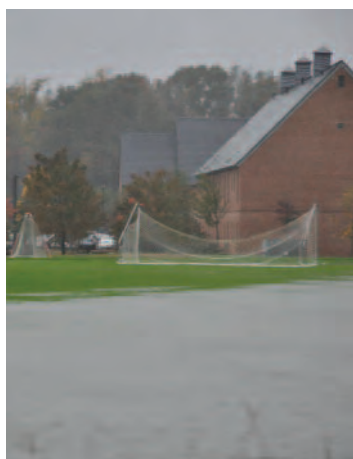
- Resource management: Make sure you have enough staffing and contractors to maintain all shifts with places for them to rest in case long hours are needed.
- Fleet Management: Make sure your vehicle fleet is gassed up with extra gas and properly stored in case of power failure that could put your gas tanks out of service.
- Back up Power: Make sure all generators are filled with fuel and are working properly.
- Flying Debris: Make sure all tables and chairs or any other loose items are put away or tied down.

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Your headquarters for a storm event or also known as an Incident Command System (ICS) is used by public agencies all the time.



- **Emergency Response:** Have a safety program in place during and after the storm for trafficking pedestrian sidewalks and roadways blocked from debris and falling trees.
- **Trafficking:** Develop outbound evacuation routes and emergency vehicles routes inbound and outbound. Have areas for air-lifts, if necessary and/or feasible.
- **Crisis Communications:** Have a form of communication like cell phones or UHF or VHF two-way radios etc.
- **Conduct a Business Impact Analysis (BIA):** Areas to consider are payroll, equipment rentals, food, water, etc.
- **Information Technology:** One of the most important people to have at your round table discussion is IT. Having a plan in place in case of power loss and know what areas are critical for fully operational systems in case servers go down are crucial to your storm readiness plan.
- **Incident Management Training:** Like anything, practice makes perfect, but it is hard to plan for the unknown, so use all types of scenarios with your plan and grade them on effectiveness and failures to make your team better prepared. Use exercise results to evaluate the overall effectiveness of your plan.



### DURING THE STORM

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Your headquarters for a storm event or also known as an Incident Command System (ICS) is used by public agencies all the time. This system is also effective in these instances and is starting to be used widely in the private sector. At the very least it may not be a bad idea to be familiarizing yourself and your team with its protocols. Not all weather events require activating the ICS; just those that meet the guidelines established by your administration. ICS Checklist:

- Point of Contact (POC) or person in charge of operation.
- Assess the situation and let POC know if first responders are needed.
- In case of emergency, the appointed internal emergency team is in charge of areas until first responders show up.
- Notify or verify internal teams, departments, public agencies, regulators, contractors and suppliers have been notified and are on standby.
- Appoint others to incident command positions as needed.
- Brief staff on current organization protocol and on events as they unfold.
- Terminate the response and demobilize resources when the situation has been stabilized and safe for reentry.
- Identify and assess hazardous situations and high risk areas until all areas have been cleared internally and/or externally.

### AFTER THE STORM (ASSESSMENT-CHECKLIST)

After the storm passes, assess your damages and log all your property and equipment damages with your facility. Also, log all the man hours it takes to clean up the debris and water damage from the storm. If your governor declares a state of emergency and it is signed by the President, then you may be considered for some relief from FEMA; however, you need to have your ducks in row.

- Manage all financial aspects of the incident.
- Provide financial and cost analysis information, as requested.
- Create accounts for claims and costs; coordinate with logistics.
- Track worker time and costs for materials and supplies.
- Document claims for damage, liability and injuries.
- Notify risk management/insurance to initiate claims reporting.
- Provide incurred and forecasted costs at planning meetings.
- Provide oversight of financial expenditures, new leases, contracts and assistance agreements to comply with corporate governance.

**Public Relations checklist:** Only state facts that are cleared through upper management and ISC. Develop brief information for use in media briefings. Monitor and forward useful information to the media.

### FINANCIAL AID STEPS (CHECKLIST)

Your sports complex could be reimbursed by FEMA for labor, equipment rental, property damage etc. Here are the ten protocol



steps by FEMA for you to follow to help increase the chances of eligibility for financial aid reimbursement.

([http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/pa/fema323\\_app\\_ha\\_ndbk.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/pa/fema323_app_ha_ndbk.pdf))

1. The governor of your state requests federal assistance.
2. Federal and state governments collect information on the extent of damages and put together a damage assessment report.
3. The President signs off for state of emergency or disaster relief funding.
4. Your local state will brief all applicants and work closely with you once approved.
5. FEMA and your local state representative will meet with meet with you and your administration for a kick off meeting.
6. The FEMA staff will work with you on projects and estimating cost.
7. Your local and state appointees and FEMA will evaluate all damage assessment cost.
8. FEMA will transfer funding to the state and you will work with state official to obtain funding.
9. After you obtain funding on any project, FEMA and your state will work with you until work is complete.
10. The final step is closing out your project along with FEMA and your local state official.

**Precautions for Weather Patterns:** The National Weather Service has learned over the past few years the predictability of certain types of weather patterns that could help you to forecast. This forecasting could help you to prepare for what items you may need or to add more contingences in your budget for events such as an extreme drought year or vice versa an extreme rainy year and snowy winter. I have looked up a lot of facts from the National Weather Service <http://www.weather.gov/> and put together a list that might be a useful tool when forecasting your budget for your next fiscal year.

La- Niña is unusually drier conditions in the southwest of the United States that starts in late summer and actually continues through the winter. The Central Plains will have drier than normal conditions in the fall and in the Southeast, theirs will be start in the winter with warmer temperature than normal. On the opposite end of this spectrum the Pacific Northwest will encounter wetter conditions and cooler temperatures then normal and also with a well establish La-Niña you will have fewer costal storms in the northeast, but more Alberta Clippers with more milder and warmer temperature then normal. I would caution; however, La Niña typically brings more hurricanes to the Atlantic coast and less to the Pacific coast.

EL-Niño typically brings drought conditions through the northwest to the northeast of the United States. The winters are very mild and above normal temperatures; however, extreme flooding could hit the Gulf States in the winter months.

Pineapple Express typically causes wide-spread flooding, strong winds to the Pacific coast and heavy snow accumulations to northwest.

Siberian Express typically brings polar air from the Siberian

and across Western Canada in a southward trend to the central, northeastern and sometimes the southeastern part of the United States. This weather front will bring extreme cold weather temperatures that could linger for days and even weeks.

Mother Nature will always be unpredictable and will always have the last word. All of us who have been in the business long enough already knows this; however, planning for severe weather events to saves lives, property and equipment should be on everyone's radar. Having a plan in place and the resources ready in case of a catastrophic weather event happens at your sports field complex can heighten your readiness and professionalism for your employer and even more importantly to your community. I hope you will never have to go through any severe weather event. I know our jobs can be difficult enough without Mother Nature barring down her wrath on us. No matter if you have a simple plan or a complex plan, it still boils down to one thing, it's a plan and planning is always good. Sometimes a community event as simple as a ball game could bring back a sense of normalcy and help in the healing process to your community. I think at times we can do more for our community then we may even realize. ■

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