

BEST PRACTICES:

Flood Recovery & Customer Relations Guide

To assist companies and individuals who store, install, and operate mechanical systems in areas that have been flooded, the following recommendations have been prepared by the Air Conditioning Contractors of America (ACCA), the Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Distributors International (HARDI), the Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI) and Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC).

What to do with Warehoused Equipment at Contractor or Distributor Office Locations

Contractors and Distributors may have unopened HVAC equipment in their businesses that appears to be directly affected by flooding. However, you should NOT attempt to operate or test any mechanical equipment or electrical systems that have been exposed to flood waters.

- The exterior of your equipment and systems may appear normal, but there may be residual moisture within, or around, these systems and equipment.
- Systems may contain micro-organisms, such as bacteria and fungi, that may grow in areas with residual moisture.

When flooding recedes, equipment may still contain water, silt, or other contaminants that are not immediately visible.

- Your equipment could be PERMANENTLY damaged if you

attempt to start it without proper cleaning and preparation.

Call your local distributor or manufacturing representative for advice on what to do with equipment that you have in storage, which may have been in contact with flood waters.

- It is possible that there could be equipment shortages and manufacturers may recommend that contractors and distributors attempt to clean and restore equipment.

If you have been advised to clean and restore your warehoused equipment, you should follow the industry's standard – ACCA Standard 6 – Restoring the Cleanliness of HVAC Systems for Residential and Commercial HVAC Applications.

- ACCA Standard 6 is available for free download from <http://www.acca.org/standards/quality>.



- The 27 page document describes cleaning methods and procedures that focus on improving the overall indoor air quality, existing equipment life, and safeguarding the building through comprehensive restoration practices. This Standard also provides direction to assess the economic viability of replacing HVAC components or systems versus cleaning them.

Communicate to your customers about the need to practice safe handling and disposal HVAC/R equipment and controls – especially mercury thermostats.

- Some controls still contain mercury and can be found in various devices in residential buildings.
- When a mercury-containing product breaks and the mercury is

spilled, the exposed mercury can evaporate and become an invisible, odorless toxic vapor.

- To prevent mercury releases, these products should be removed,

stored safely, and managed properly at the end of their useful lives, particularly in demolition and repair applications during a flood.

- Visit <https://www.thermostat-recycle.org/statelaws/> to learn about your state's recycling programs.

Best Practices for Contractors Working with Customers in Flood Areas

BE PROACTIVE: In the event of a widespread emergency, you are encouraged to immediately reach out to your customer base, particularly those with maintenance/service agreements, or customers who you have had recent interactions with.

- There is a good chance that you will have up-to-date records on these buildings detailing the type of equipment they contain, which should give you an approximation of how much equipment your existing customers may need.
- Next, reach out to your distributors to determine equipment availabilities and relay that information as quickly as possible to customers who may be in a heavily flooded area.

Communicate with customers about the effects that flood waters have on HVAC equipment and systems, paying particular attention to the following areas:

- Customers should NEVER start their HVAC system before a professional contracting company has surveyed the equipment.
- Flooded equipment may contain residual water, silt, bacteria, and fungi that may cause damage to the system or damage the indoor air quality if not remediated.
- Any equipment that contains steel is prone to rusting and needs to be replaced.

- If any electrical connections were flooded, then they must be replaced.
- These are VERY GOOD subjects to post on social media for customers.

Contractors should also warn customers about the potential for unscrupulous actors who may take advantage of a natural disaster

- Remind customers that it is essential to hire a trusted company who is trained on proper HVAC equipment cleaning and remediation protocols, like the ACCA Standard 6.

Contractors are HIGHLY encouraged to add additional phone lines or reimburse staff for their personal cellular phones to ensure that customers have access to timely information from experts.

- Superior customer service is of utmost importance in these situations.
- Be available, be respectful, and be an expert.

Contractors should keep their eye on the ball and maintain their quality reputation.

- In widespread disasters, you may be overly eager and take on too much work... DO NOT DO THIS!
- You should maintain the quality contracting practices that have



earned you a reputation as a trusted company.

- You should take advantage of the opportunity to remind customers that you will install equipment properly, refusing to rush a job.
- A rushed service call or installation is likely to lead to multiple call backs.

While a natural disaster is certainly not something that contractors wish for, there may be additional business opportunities available.

- You might find that some customers may view repair work from a disaster as an opportunity to undertake new projects in their home or building; make sure this is something your company is prepared to address.
- If the opportunity presents itself, inform the customer that your company has recently expanded its business offerings to include certain services that they may be interested in: plumbing and electrical upgrades, home security, home automation, etc.