

How to prevent pest invasions during extreme weather



Extreme weather and environmental events such as droughts, hurricanes, floods, and wildfires are becoming more frequent and unpredictable. The United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has reported that in 2023 the US was struck with a record 28 “billion-dollar disasters.” These included record heat waves, droughts, wildfires and floods, costing in total over \$92 billion.¹

In addition to the costly damage, these extreme weather conditions also impact a number of urban pests, leading to sudden and significant increases in pest activity in and around buildings. This can be particularly challenging for facilities that are not adequately prepared, and if not addressed promptly, these infestations may pose a risk to people and businesses.

To help you prepare for extreme weather, this brief provides a five-point plan for strengthening your facility’s defenses against pests.

Pest risks after storms

Extreme weather can lead to flooding, building damage, and scattered debris, which creates a perfect environment for pests such as snakes, fire ants, rodents, and cockroaches. These pests may find their way into buildings through damaged doors, windows, vents, and holes in the structure. Sudden decreases in temperature or drought can also cause pests to seek new places to shelter or find food.

Debris scattered around and on buildings, as well as standing water, attracts pests and creates a breeding ground for mosquitoes, gnats, and other water-borne pests. After a flood, the mosquito population can rapidly increase, leading to more bites and a greater risk of diseases like West Nile virus, Zika, and dengue.

¹ NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters (2024). <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/>, DOI: 10.25921/stkw-7w73

Developing a plan of action

To prepare for these potential pest infestations, we recommend a five-point plan:



**1. ENSURE BUILDING
STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY**



**2. EXTERIOR GROUNDS
MAINTENANCE**



**3. YEAR-ROUND
MONITORING OF PEST RISKS**



**4. WEATHER EVENT
PREPAREDNESS**



**5. POST-EVENT ASSESSMENT, PEST
MANAGEMENT, AND CLEANUP**

1. ENSURE BUILDING STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

To ensure that your facility is well prepared to withstand weather or environmentally-driven pest invasions, it's important to make facility inspection a part of your maintenance routine. At least every season do a thorough inspection of the building's exterior and patch, repair, or seal any holes, gaps, or cracks. Keep in mind that even an opening as small as 1/4 inch can be enough for a mouse to enter.

Additionally, don't forget to inspect the roof for damage, particularly around any entry points such as vents, HVAC units, pipes, and cables. Birds and rodents can take advantage of damaged roofs to gain access to shelter inside a building. Clean out gutters and drains and remove debris and standing water.

By doing these inspections and preparations, you can also prevent moisture from entering the building structure, which can be the root cause of many pest issues.

2. EXTERIOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Plants, shrubs, and trees can create pathways for rodents and also provide hiding places for insects and rodents. To prevent this, keep them trimmed and at least 18 inches away from buildings, making sure no branches touch the ground.

Storing old equipment, firewood, or piles of debris also offers a perfect harborage for pests fleeing from weather – and the closer they are to your building, the more likely it is that pests will attempt to move into your facility. If possible, remove these items altogether, but keep them at least 25 feet away from buildings.

3. YEAR-ROUND MONITORING OF PEST RISKS

We recommend that you work with your pest management provider to develop an ongoing monitoring program. This program will help detect any pest-related problems at an early stage, giving you and your provider ample time to develop a proactive action plan.

4. WEATHER EVENT PREPAREDNESS

It's important to keep track of local and national weather forecasts so that you have enough time to prepare for extreme weather events. Even with just 48 hours notice, you can take precautions to prevent damage and protect your buildings from pests and moisture. Depending on the specific conditions, you may need to board windows, lay down sandbags as a flood barrier, seal gaps and cracks, and more.

5. POST-EVENT ASSESSMENT, PEST MANAGEMENT, AND CLEANUP

After any extreme weather event, it is important to carry out a post-event assessment, take necessary pest control measures, and clean up areas that could potentially attract pests. For instance, it's advisable to remove trees that fall close to your building or clear debris from the roof, as both of these could be harboring pests.

Your pest management provider can help you determine additional appropriate pest control measures to help prevent pests from infesting your property.

Your best course of action: be prepared

It's important to understand the correlation between weather and pest activity and to identify the specific risk areas in your facility during different weather conditions.

Start preparing now! Use the checklist below to assess your facility and begin developing a five-point action plan to reduce your facility's pest risk—even during the most extreme weather.

WEATHER & PEST RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to create a 5-point action plan for strengthening your facility's defenses against weather-influenced pest activity.

Y N Structural or grounds action points

- Door sweeps are in place on exterior doors.
- Windows are screened.
- Window and door frames are intact.
- Holes, gaps, or cracks on the exterior are repaired or sealed with material that prevents pest entry.
- Rooftop is free of debris and damage.
- Gaps around HVAC or other equipment line entry points are sealed.
- Signs are in place to encourage employees to keep doors closed.
- Trees and shrubs are trimmed at least 18 inches from buildings.
- Old equipment or debris is removed or stored at least 25 feet from buildings.

Y N Planning action points

- A contracted pest management provider is in place or you have a pest control expert on your staff.
- There is a contact appointed to monitor weather event preparedness.
- A phone tree or contact plan is in place for weather emergencies.
- A post-weather event assessment and action plan have been documented and all parties have been informed of their roles.



OUR EXPERTS CAN HELP YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

Creating a pest control action plan • Pest, bird, and wildlife exclusion • Mosquito services
Termite control • Vegetation management