

After The After-Math Of Hurricane Sandy

By Michael Wolfe, President of Midboro Management



I personally lost power in my home for 13 days but that is nothing in comparison to those who lost or had to leave their homes. Although many weather forecasts are not as accurate as we'd like them to be it is imperative that you prepare for the worst.

We notified the residents in our managed properties (95) how to prepare for the storm. After the storm, our staff focused on our downtown portfolio that was without power. We brainstormed to arrive at options that were possible to generate the necessary power that would provide water and electricity for public lighting to our clients that were without power. Con Edison had announced that they had suffered more damage to their electrical equipment from Hurricane Sandy than from any storm in their history.

We monitored the recovery efforts of Con Edison as reported in news conferences and online updates. We were in a very tough spot. If delivering these alternatives was not a possibility, then the situation was going to create a great hardship to those residents who either by choice or without alternative housing, as well as create an uninhabitable condition in a building taller than six-stories because of water supply issues.

In most buildings, City water pressure provides cold water up to the first six floors. Hot water for the entire building and cold water for floors seven and above is typically supplied by water from the roof tank. In the absence of electricity, the house pumps are off, making it impossible to fill the roof water tanks at all.

It was just a matter of time before the buildings without power would run out of cold water for floors seven and above. Unless residents filled their bathtubs (as we recommended in our pre-storm notice) or have alternate gallons of water to pour into your toilet to cause it to flush, toilets would be inoperable.

Fortunately, through the combination of the efforts of the Midboro staff and our building staffs, the buildings had tremendous support through this ordeal. While our buildings were without power and beginning the day after the storm, Midboro representatives visited each building and superintendent.

We supplied each building with light sticks, extra batteries, lanterns, and detailed instructions. We obtained a generator that we were able to bring to several buildings to power the house pumps and fill roof tanks with water. Essentially when the generator arrived at the building, it was met by our electrician who would provide the electrical hookup to the roof tank pumps, providing the necessary power to fill the tank.

This procedure took approximately two hours. It would then be disconnected so the generator could be driven to the next building. Our vendors said this was an unprecedented approach. Other generating equipment was

supplied to buildings for powering stairwell, hallways and lobbies.

A protocol was drafted by my staff for superintendents to follow prior to the return of power and water. By following these procedures, we avoided electrical surges that could have damaged appliances in apartments and building systems like boilers and pumps.

As a result they were fully prepared for the resumption of electric service and water throughout the building. Our residents received instructions and information to address initial water color issues and the handling of garbage in the wake of returning home to refrigerators filled with spoiled food items.

When power returned, we were ecstatic that our residents could return to their homes at a certain level of normalcy. As of writing this article, two weeks later, my family home is still without power. It is irony at its best.

I do not love emergencies, yet I love emergency management. The passion I have for this business is my singular and sincere desire to help our residents in any way possible in times of need. Surprisingly, the number of phone calls received from board members of prospective new accounts grew three fold the week after Hurricane Sandy due to referrals resulting from our responsiveness and preparation before, during and after the storm.

All because we, as property managers, were doing our job. I could not be prouder of our staff at Midboro and the staffs in our buildings that performed above and beyond.

Michael Wolfe is the President of Midboro Management, Inc. Founded in 1963, Midboro Management is currently responsible for a portfolio of more than 90 luxury cooperative, condominium, rental and commercial properties. Wolfe is the recipient of The Real Estate Board of New York's "Management Executive of the Year Award", Habitat Magazine's Gold Management Achievement Award and has been a popular guest instructor/lecturer at the Real Estate Board of New York for continuing Education and at the Annual Council of New York Cooperatives and Condominiums (CNYC) Housing Conference. He is a member of the Real Estate Board of New York's (REBNY) Residential Management Council, member of the board of the New York Association of Realty Managers (NYARM) and the Association of Cooperative and Condominium Managers (ACCM).

*Michael Wolfe
President
Midboro Management
148 West 37th Street
New York, NY 10018
Tel: 212-877-8500
www.midboro.com*