

Self-Storage News

March/April 2019



OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS SELF STORAGE ASSOCIATION

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the Horizon?

Plan for Business Continuity
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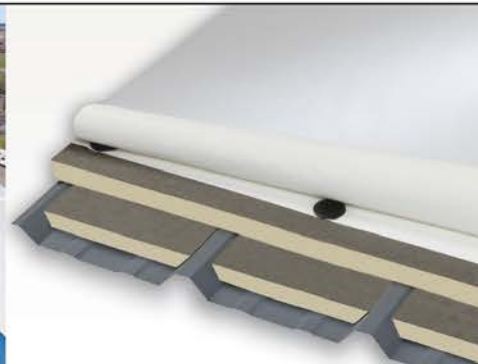
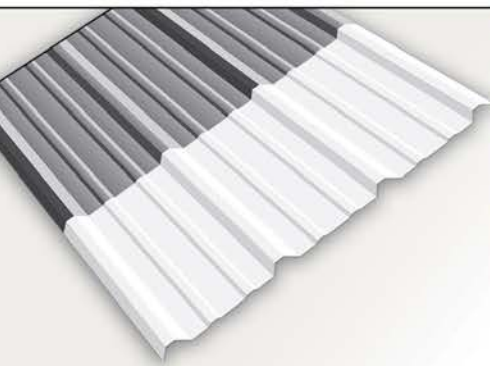
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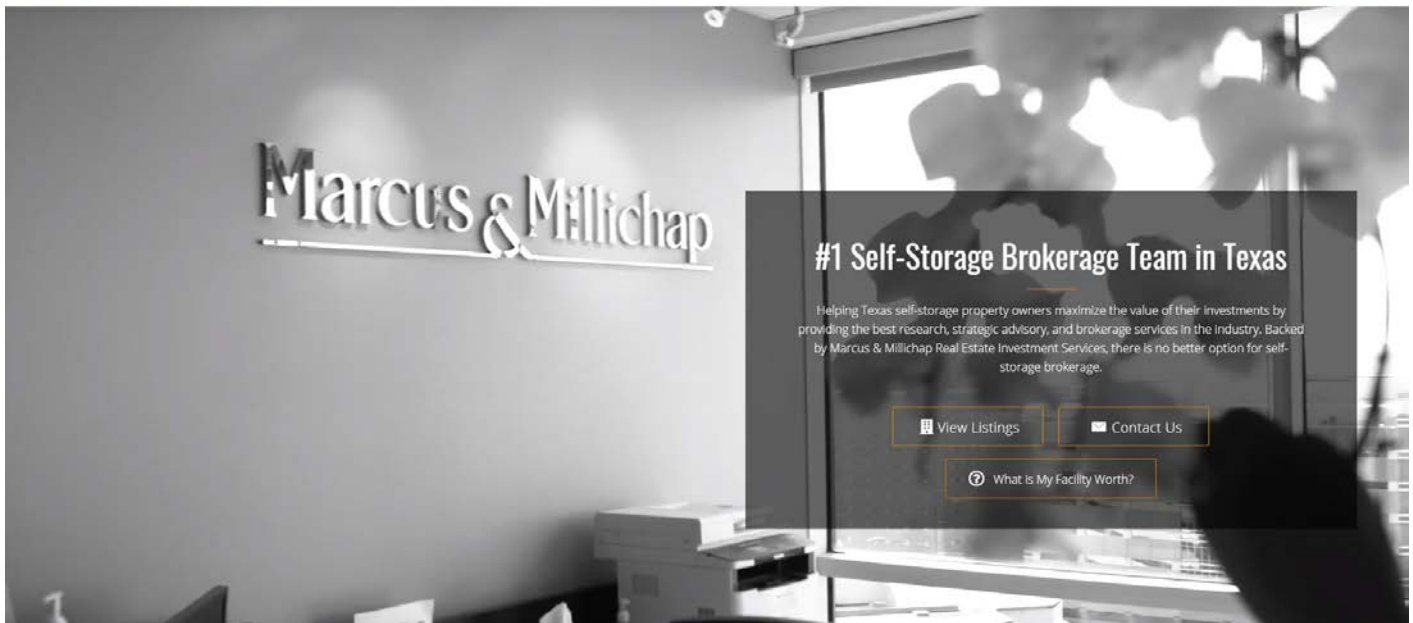
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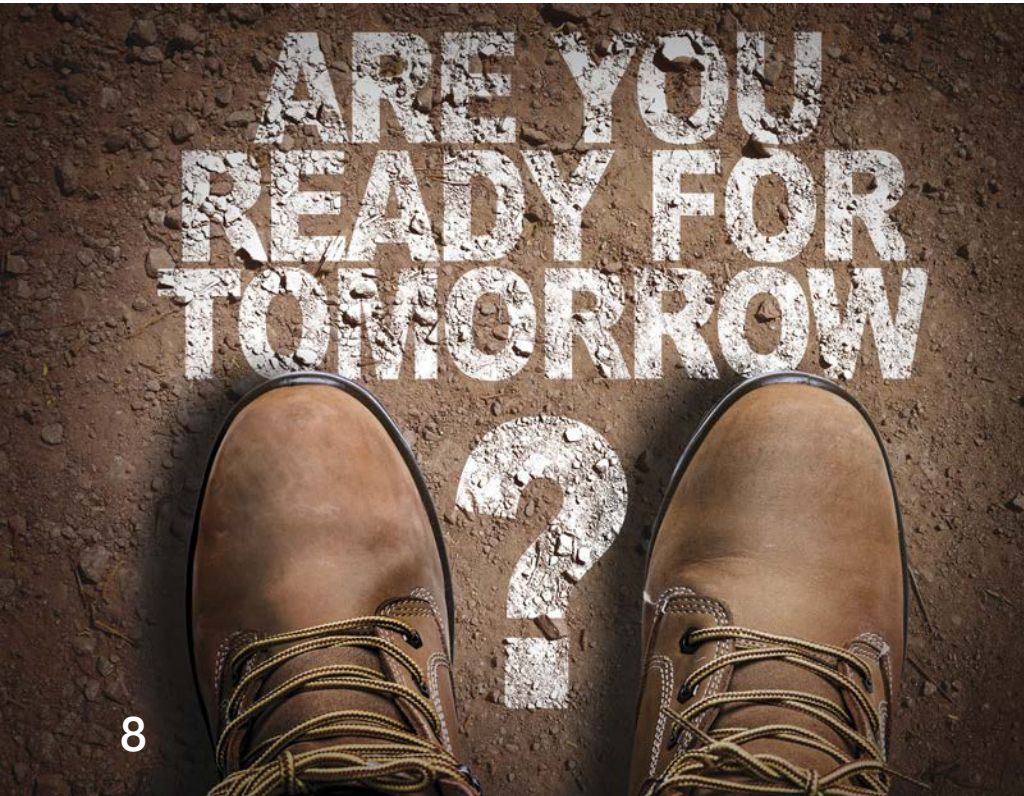
Brandon Karr
First Vice President Investments
Fort Worth Office
(817) 932-6163
brandon.karr@marcusmillichap.com

Kyle Newswanger
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FEATURES

- 8 What's Beyond the Horizon? Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery**
We never know what's around the next corner, around the bend or over the horizon. How do you ensure that your business can operate after unexpected events? Can you plan for the unexpected?
by Jennifer Jones
- 12 FAQs: Property Tax Assessments**
It's that time of year. Do you understand your property tax assessment and is there more that you can do besides groan? Learn more with Eckhoff's frequently asked questions.
by Mike Eckhoff
- 16 Downtime Duties**
Rather than viewing the slow period as a negative, use it to ultimately make your business better. There are many things you can do to position your facility for the busy season.
by Tracie Seed
- 23 NEW! Quick Tips**
Operations: Creating an Emergency Manual
Marketing: Top Five Pro Marketing Strategies for the Busy Season
Management: Top Five Ways Managers Prepare for the Busy Season
- 34 Top Legal Articles**
We recap the "Five TSSA Lease Essentials Every Manager Needs to Know" and "Online Leasing and Paperless Offices."
by Connie Heyer

DEPARTMENTS

- 4** President's Message
- 30** Association News
- 32** Industry Data
- 34** Self-Storage Solutions
- 40** TSSA Networking Luncheons
- 42** Managers Corner
- 44** Members in the News
- 49** Bulletin Board/Ad Index
- 50** Industry News
- 52** New Members

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Preparation is Key for Your Future Success



This issue of *Self-Storage News* is focused on preparedness and rightly so.

We are turning a corner into the spring season, which always seems to present the probability of inclement weather throughout our great state of Texas. Having a sound disaster plan at your facility is always a good business practice.

Our own Ideal Self Storage team has met with a local restoration company and created a disaster plan for different scenarios. I prefer to keep a cloud-based backup digital file property map to identify key items such as where our water main shut-off valve, gas meter, electrical power supply rooms, and fire sprinkler suppression systems are located, so they can be quickly shown to disaster personnel. Accompanying this is a spreadsheet with information to help us quickly contact our preferred vendor companies: tenant protection plan providers, fire and smoke restoration service providers, roofers, electricians, plumbers and other contractors. Communicating with your team and keeping these items up-to-date will make things far less stressful during a disaster.

Property taxes are also at the forefront of everyone's mind as the new county property values are being assessed. With all of the recent buying and selling of self-storage facilities, the appraisal districts are getting much more aggressive on their valuations. Many of the primary markets have

been hit hard by the appraisal districts, and I've seen firsthand that some of the counties which have far smaller markets are starting to focus on self storage.

Remember there are ways to protest your taxes to fight for equal and uniform value. If you don't have experience protesting your property taxes, there are several consultants you can hire to help you with the process. Also, if you are financing your property, educating your lenders to not disclose the loan amount on the deed of trust will help all of us in the long run.

Now that the spring leasing season is kicking off, we are all busy tidying up and deploying our strategies for the hustle of the busy season. With the amount of new, sophisticated and aggressive operators entering the space, you may want to consider shaking things up a bit. Studio rental suites, charity auction storage units and cloud-based backup storage solutions are just a few new examples that are gaining momentum.

Ginny Sutton and the rest of the TSSA staff are keeping an eye on the potential of offering an association health plan and will keep you abreast of any information that unfolds. The


staff is also working diligently to license the digital lease to the members, and there is light at the end of the tunnel. Stay tuned for details.

One last thing that affects everyone in the industry on all sides of the preparedness spectrum is the topic of succession. I challenge each of you to ask yourself, "What is my succession plan?" The reality is that things happen, and having a plan for you and yours is one of the most important things you can leave behind.

I wish you all the best this spring. If there is anything the TSSA staff or Board of Directors can do for you, please feel free to reach out to us anytime. ■

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Martin".

A person wearing a bright green long-sleeved shirt is holding a large, plain brown cardboard box. The person's hand is visible, gripping the side of the box. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

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EDITOR

Jennifer Jones
JKJ Marketing

PUBLICATION DESIGN

Andrea Exter
Monarch Media & Consulting, Inc.

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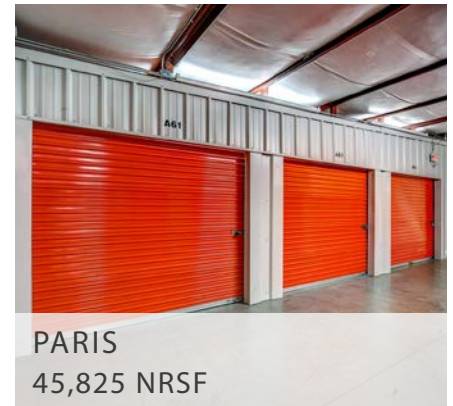
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WHAT'S BEYOND THE HORIZON?

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery



BE PREPARED

by Jennifer Jones, Self-Storage News Managing Editor

We never know what's around the next corner, around the bend or over the horizon. Tomorrow is never promised, yet we plan for our future and hope for the best.

Yet, there are things that can throw us a curve ball. Natural and man-made disasters can wreak havoc on your business. Preparation is the key to recovery and resilience; it's the difference between being on a boat with a life raft or having to swim for it with no horizon in sight. There are two types of plans that are often used interchangeably: a business continuity plan and a disaster recovery plan.

"A business continuity plan (BCP) is a defined, documented strategy designed to help business owners and their employees prepare for any event that may disrupt business operations, including natural disasters, single-building fires or floods, supplier outages and more," says Mick Whittemore, vice president of IT enterprise operations at Paychex.

According to Whittemore, a disaster recovery plan (DRP) describes how to

Proper preparation prevents poor performance.

resume business operations quickly and is typically applied to details-level planning of an organization's IT infrastructure and applications. The plan should enable IT to recover enough data and system functionality to operate the business.

It's fair to say that most people roll the dice on whether or not disaster will hit. Insurance, establishing redundancies and disaster planning can be expensive and time consuming. Where do you start? How do you find the time? Preparing your business to function after a disaster (natural or man-made) can be the biggest determining factor on if, or how quickly, your business recovers.

A well-thought-out emergency plan can protect your employees, tenants and assets. It can help you recover quicker by giving you clear directions on what to do rather than risk panic and chaos. When you take the time to develop a plan before disaster strikes, you are able to think more clearly and

work out different situations and their consequences. When you are in the middle of a disaster, you react.

"It is the owner's responsibility to give managers the tools to do their job effectively, whether it's a marketing tool or disaster plan," says Paul Darden of the Paul Darden Company, who has 30 years of experience in self storage and has owned multiple facilities.

Darden says that preparation is key. "It's going to cut owners' headaches in half. The fact that you know what you're going to do before, during and after is a roadmap. You've thought through what you will do, and in some cases, may even do dry runs to make sure it will work smoothly."

NATURAL DISASTERS

Business continuity plans are crucial preparation for natural and other disasters. Hurricanes, floods and fires can sink a business. According to "A New England Journal of

Medicine” study, “There were three times as many natural disasters from 2000 through 2009 as there were from 1980 through 1989.” Climate-related events accounted for almost 80 percent of the increase, and since 1990, they have affected 217 million people every year.

DEVELOP A PLAN

There are several steps to creating both plans, so some companies just create one for the whole cycle.

1. Determine who will create the plan and who will be on the team.
2. Analyze possible hazards and emergency situations to create a list.
3. Develop action plans for each scenario (fire, cyberattack, etc.)
4. Create a written document.
5. Train everyone how to use the plan.

For example, there could be a fire at your facility, which means there are a number of questions you will need to address when creating your plan. You should also work through the two different scenarios in which the fire either happens during business hours, when people are at the facility, or a fire that takes place when you and your employees are not on site.

- Who will you call first? Who do you notify next?
- What specific plan should be followed?
- What is the physical safety plan for those at the facility?
- What if it happens during business hours?
- What if it happens after hours?
- How do you secure the facility and communicate to your tenants?
- Who is in charge of those communications?
- Do you want your tenants to hear about the fire on the news or from you first?
- What will you do if the media appears? Who (if anyone) is authorized to speak to them to give a statement?
- If a fire affects the office, do you have backups of your data, leases, tenant contact information, etc., in an off-site location? Who has access to that information? How quickly can you get it?
- If a fire affected multiple units, how do you keep track of who has been contacted and who has not?

How do you track who has had an opportunity to go through their unit and who has not?

- Who will contact the insurance provider? Do you know what your coverage is? Do you have enough capital to cover your deductible?

Since some natural disasters come with warnings (e.g., hurricanes and floods), be sure to consider what should be done in advance to prepare/protect your facility, employees and assets.

Be sure to think through each situation and how it will affect your facility, your team and your tenants.

CYBERATTACKS

Simply installing a firewall and backing up your system is no longer the fool-proof plan to protect your business from ransomware and other cyber-attacks.

“Safeguarding your data should include a detailed look at security countermeasures and bolstering your overall security wherever necessary, including



Today, organizations of any size need look no further than the public cloud for backup resiliency. With the public cloud, even the smallest organization can back up and replicate its infrastructure...

but not limited to physical and internal controls, perimeter, policy and education,” says Joe Mercus, CEO for Cloud Daddy and former CIO for New York City Law Department. “There are many moving parts within an organization, and if you haven’t done this before, you can use the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s suggested framework.

“Today, organizations of any size need look no further than the public cloud for backup resiliency. With the public cloud, even the smallest organization can back up and replicate its infrastructure through snapshots that are taken continuously throughout the business day and full backups that are performed and replicated across regions and accounts.

“Good cyber hygiene and best practices need to be implemented in both the public and private sectors to defend against such attacks before AI makes it even harder to stop. Unfortunately, many people are not particularly well educated in what to do and what not to do to recognize possible hacking efforts. Without private and public sector initiatives to educate users in addition to improvements in overall cyber hygiene, as a result, we may see these smarter hacking activities result in crippling consequences in both business and government.

“Time will tell how damaging these trends may be to the networking world, but one thing is for certain: Organizations need to get a better handle on their data protection strategies if they hope to come out unscathed at the end of the year.”

Mercus offers some best practices for businesses:

- Start at the desktop by continuously pushing patches and updates. Keep up with updates or you’ll risk infection from problems across multiple desktops and connected server resources.
- Regularly push out operating system patches, zero-day vulnerability patches and security updates. If you’re sitting on an unpatched vulnerability, you risk having it used against you.
- Put firewalls in place. Cloud web application firewalls must be used and appropriately set, and ports blocked, or you will be hacked.

- Good communication is essential. The IT experts putting together your servers may not also be security experts. They need to be very tightly coupled with the staff member or outside IT specialist you work with to make sure there is clearly-defined responsibility for backups.
- Educate employees about email. Opening and clicking links in an email when you aren't sure who sent it is a huge mistake. Some emails are sent to "undisclosed recipients," which is a red flag that it isn't a legitimate email.
- To protect from natural disasters, your backup should be stored in a separate location from your facility.

"Most organizations do not actively test whether their backup and disaster recovery plans actually work. They are just making backups, and when they restore, they may be going backward into backups that don't actually work or may not bounce back from advanced persistent threats.

"The cloud makes it simple to backup, take snapshots and replicate objects to other regions and accounts, adding layers of disaster recoverability

that can benefit any enterprise when recovering from a cyber disaster.

"These simple steps may not completely protect you from ransomware, but in my experience, they're the difference between an inconvenience and a [complete] system rebuild.

"If you haven't used the public cloud for data protection before, now is a perfect time to test the waters as you review and make changes to your disaster recovery plans. You can begin by selecting and testing cloud providers. Many of the most well-known cloud providers offer free tiers or trials that allow you to upload data to the cloud and explore the platform. *(Full disclosure: Joe Mercas' company, Cloud Daddy, is a partner of AWS.)*

"With an unlimited backup capacity providing layers of data protection, the public cloud provides the means to ensure your organization can recover from any disaster, whether natural or manufactured."

Hardware/software failure or corruption can happen through viruses and power surges. Backups help protect against these disasters.

If you don't store your data in the cloud, there are numerous companies that offer cloud storage for business.

RESOURCES

Compiling a list of resources and vendors ahead of time will make the preparation process more efficient. In the case of a natural disaster, you will likely need dumpsters onsite. Who will you get them from? Do you have a contact for a portable toilet company to accommodate additional people at your facility? Who is your favorite contractor for repairs?

By having a list of vendors handy, you can simply go down the list. If you have advanced warning, like with a hurricane, getting on their schedule before-hand is a good idea to ensure that you have what you need, when you need it, rather than risk them running out like during Hurricane Harvey.

The TSSA website lists a number of articles, forms and advice under the Resources tab. Be sure to read the previous articles on disaster planning and the legal forms and advice.

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Determine if you want to have bottles of water on hand. Other items to think about include: battery-powered cell phone charger, generator, flashlight, and a first aid kit. Think about what items you might need to operate if you are without power or water for a few days.

Start building your life raft today to protect your business, your employees and your tenants well before the next disaster strikes. ■

**Portions of Joe Mercas' contribution were originally published in Forbes and Dark Reading.*

Jennifer Jones, owner of JKJ Marketing, has more than 15 years experience in developing and implementing traditional and digital marketing strategies, writing and editing.

Joe Mercas is the CEO and co-founder of Cloud Daddy. He is a senior executive with over 30 years of extensive experience in cloud services, information technology, cybersecurity, data communications and manufacturing, with a diverse background in both private/corporate as well as public sector settings. Joe formerly served as CIO within New York City government.

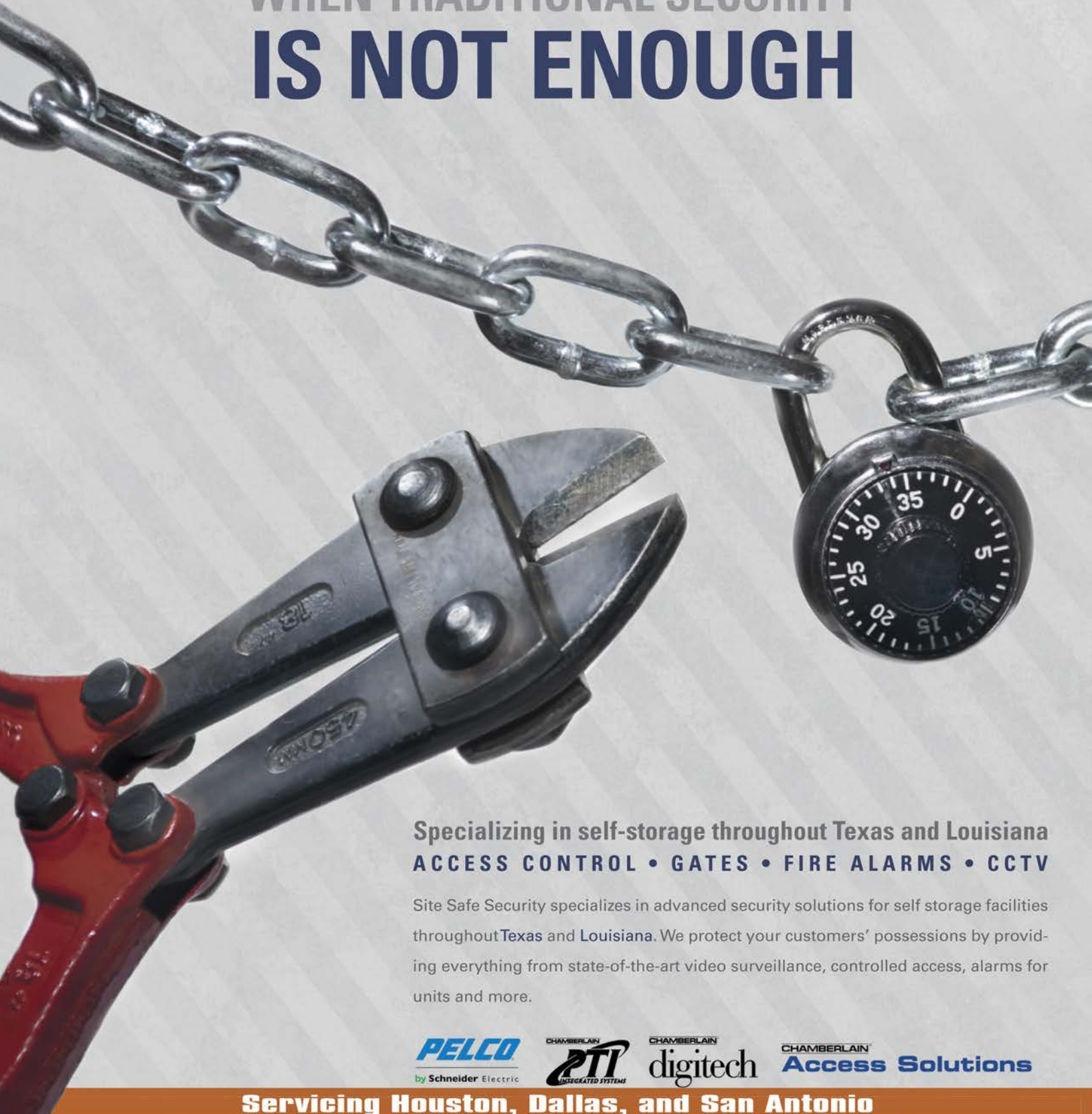
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FAQs: PROPERTY TAX ASSESSMENTS

by Mike Eckhoff, Assessment Advisors



It's That Time of Year. Understanding Property Tax Assessment Is the First Step in Protecting Your Business.

Escalating property taxes are the bane of many businesses and homeowners. Getting hit with an enormous tax bill does not put a spring in your step. Since Texas doesn't have a state income tax, property owners bear the burden. We've seen enormous growth in the last few years with businesses booming and tons of people moving to the state, which in turn has increased property values. However, some counties seem to target certain types of businesses in different years. A couple of years ago, Bexar county facilities saw a huge increase, while in 2018 Denton County property owners were hard hit. However, it is worth your time and effort to fight those tax evaluations and figure out if they are truly in line with others in your area. Here are some common questions from other facility owners

that also prepare you to go to bat for your facility.

ESCALATING VALUES

Q: I received notice of the assessed value of my facility. I was astonished to see that the assessed value doubled! How can this be if I haven't done anything to improve the property and my rents have stayed stable?

A: There are numerous reasons valuations change from one year to the next. One such reason is the County Appraisal District (CAD) reappraisal cycle. The Texas Property Tax Code requires appraisal districts to reappraise properties at least once every three years. Though many larger counties review annually, it is not uncommon to see smaller counties that have

smaller staffs not meet the every-three-years appraisal requirement. I've seen many times where a valuation has not changed for more than five years, and yet market economics would suggest reappraisal was necessary.

Another reason the value could increase significantly is based on a prior-year protest. For example, the CAD may have proposed a value for your facility last year of \$1 million, and you disagreed and filed protest. After presenting evidence to the Appraisal Review Board (ARB), the ARB may have agreed with you and reduced the valuation to \$500,000. However, odds are if you are going to an ARB hearing, the CAD is not going to agree with the decision the ARB renders, if in your favor. Therefore, the subsequent year, the CAD may reinstate prior-year value as proposed value or use prior-year value as the starting-point

value and propose yet a higher number. Be aware that the tax code does require that a value assigned by the ARB must be carried over for one subsequent year, unless substantial evidence of market changes support otherwise. What is substantial appears to be a very gray area, and rarely does an ARB uphold this requirement.

A few other reasons for a change to your valuation could be recent sales of similar facilities, land sales in the area supporting higher values, or the CAD changed the valuation approach (from cost approach to income approach).

RENT ROLL REQUEST

Q: The county tax assessor sent a letter requesting a copy of my rent roll (with names and addresses of tenants). Am I required to provide this information to them? If I do, what will be done with this information?

A: Typically, this request is made to ensure that the appraisal district is not omitting any business personal property (BPP—furniture, fixtures, equipment and inventory) from taxation. Any BPP utilized for the operation of a business is taxable in Texas. However, these requests are most commonly for shopping centers, office buildings, warehouse parks and similar properties where numerous companies operate their businesses. Such a request is not applicable to a typical self-storage facility as business operations do not occur at most facilities, other than that of the facility owner.

Additionally, this request could be made in the hopes that it discloses rental rates of each tenant. This could be used to help the CAD determine if the rental rate should be utilized in their appraisal model for subject property.

INCOME AS BASIS OF ASSESSMENT

Q: I received a letter from my county's appraisal district that stated, "The State of Texas is requiring all mini warehouse self-storage facility valuations be based upon income produced by the property." Is this true? Is this really a state requirement?

A: No! The Property Tax Code clearly states the chief appraiser may use

DISCLOSURE OF P&L STATEMENTS

In many instances, the disclosure of the P&L can hurt your appeal as you may be getting higher rents and have lower expenses than what the CAD has modeled for your property. Disclosing these items can result in your value staying the same and increase the likelihood of additional increases in your assessment in the future.

three common approaches to value property: cost approach (replacement cost new less depreciation), market approach (sales comparison), and income approach (present value of future income stream). However, the tax code does not dictate which method an appraiser must use. Though the income approach to value is the most logical approach for income-producing properties, this is not a requirement.

P&L STATEMENTS

Q: When I informally protested the assessed value of my facility, the local appraisal district asked that I provide a copy of my Profit & Loss statement. I don't want to do that. Do I have to provide a P&L to the appraisal district? Is there something else I can provide instead?

A: No, but if you don't, rest assured that you will most likely be going to a formal Appraisal Review Board hearing.

In many instances, the disclosure of the P&L can hurt your appeal as you may be getting higher rents and have lower expenses than what the CAD has modeled for your property. Disclosing these items can result in your value staying the same and increases the likelihood of additional increases in your assessment in the future. Get a copy of the CAD's appraisal record card for your property and see if there are line items in your P&L that would be favorable to disclosure (for instance, if you have lower rents and higher expenses than the model) before sharing with CAD.

If the P&L doesn't help you, and your valuation still seems excessive, then you should prepare an Equal & Uniform study to see how your assessment compares to similar facilities.

"EQUAL AND UNIFORM" ASSESSMENT

Q: I researched the assessed values of the facilities in my area via the county's tax database and see that all the values have gone up and similarly sized facilities are valued close to mine. But almost all the other facilities have amenities my facility does not. Can I use this information to protest my assessment using the "equal and uniform" provision of state property tax code? What factors will an appraisal district consider relevant in the protest process? In short, how can I get a fair shake?

A: The primary grounds property owners utilize for the "Remedy for Unequal Appraisal" argument is Subsection 30 of Section 42.26 of the tax code which states, "The appraised value of the property exceeds the median appraised value of a reasonable number of comparable properties appropriately adjusted."

It is not uncommon for CADs to not have a uniform and equal valuation analysis even prepared for a subject property in advance of a hearing. Many CADs wait to see if the property owner is aware of this remedy and mentions it before the CAD will assemble such data. Often, however, they merely identify several properties and show you that your valuation is within the range of their comparables and consider the case closed. No two properties are identical though, and adjustments MUST be made to account for these differences.

This remedy permits the taxpayer to rely upon the market values as determined by the CAD for the comparable properties, and then the taxpayer arrives at an indication of value after adjusting the valuations of



“EQUAL AND UNIFORM” ASSESSMENT

This remedy permits the taxpayer to rely upon the market values as determined by the CAD for the comparable properties, and then the taxpayer arrives at an indication of value after adjusting the valuations of the comparables for differences in factors such as location, size, age, quality, condition and other economic factors.

the comparables for differences in factors such as location, size, age, quality, condition and other economic factors. These other factors most certainly would include ratio of climate versus non-climate units, as this has the largest impact on valuation differences. Another obvious difference would be if your property was on land that is worth \$2/SF and the comparables are on \$10/SF.

CADs that criticize this remedy do so without answering the fundamental question of why they oppose the use of their own estimates of market value of

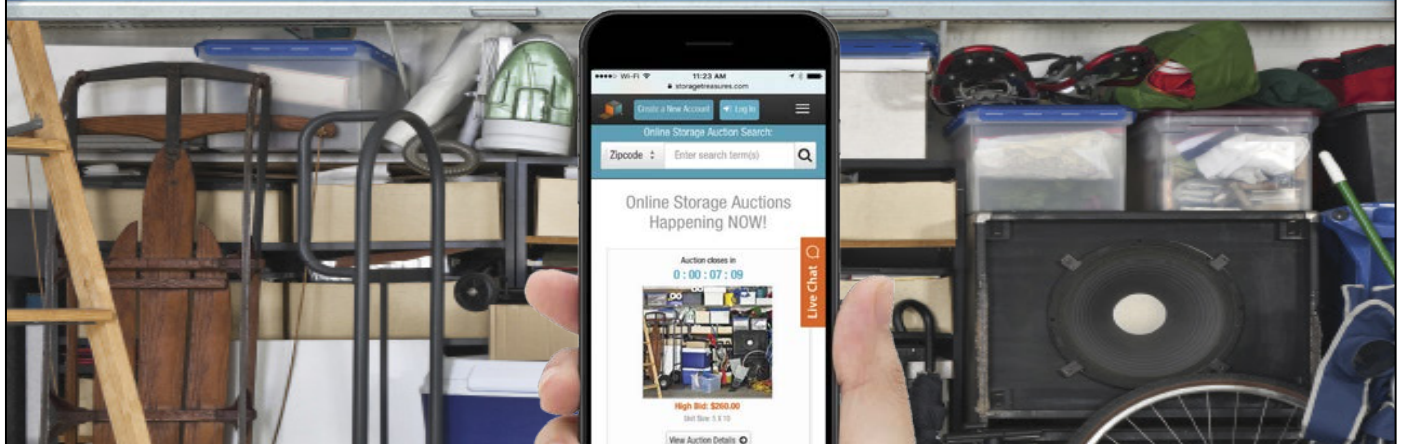
comparable properties in determining if a taxpayer's property has been unequally appraised. The obvious reason is that they do not want to have their mistakes known, which gives rise to unequal appraisals revisited upon them by other taxpayers seeking nothing more than equal treatment.

Just remember, these tips give you some different tools and different scenarios to tackle those huge increases in market valuations. It's worth your time and effort to fight them. It not only helps your facility, but the whole area, especially when many

owners in the same area are also fighting them. ■

Mike Eckhoff is the founder and president of The Woodlands based Assessment Advisors, a boutique property tax consulting firm specializing in protesting commercial real estate tax assessments. Mike has over 25 years combined appraisal and tax consulting experience and has successfully conducted tax appeals for thousands of properties throughout Texas. Additionally, Mike has been a member of the Texas Self Storage Association for nearly 15 years.

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DOWNTIME DUTIES



**Take Time
to Prepare
Your Facility
for the Busy
Season**

by Tracie Seed, TSSA Director of Marketing and Communications

While self-storage business slows down seasonally, there are ways owners and managers can work together to address everything from burned-out light bulbs and broken locks to facility repairs and staffing needs in preparation for the upswing come May.

David Robinson of Amarillo and facility manager for Amarillo Storage Station, a member of the Easy Stop family, knows this firsthand. While his facility, which is owned by National Storage Solutions Management, is transitioning to National's Easy Stop Storage brand, Robinson works hand-in-hand with corporate to keep things running smoothly. "Winter provides more 'dead spots' in my day, so I have more time to carry out repairs," he explains, adding that he also helps screen job applicants and participates in the first round of interviews. "We are a very collaborative team."

For Joel Ward, director of operations for Macho Self Storage in Dallas, with nine facilities in the DFW area, late

Rather than viewing the slow period as a negative, use it to ultimately make your business better.

spring is when business starts picking up and continues through the summer months, so he uses the time prior to shore up his facility and staff. "In the spring, people are cleaning out their houses and garages, and they are looking for a place to put their extra equipment," he says. "It's also a busy time for real estate. People are moving or staging their homes to sell and need a place to hold their furniture, so we ramp up our marketing to realtors during this time."

Rather than viewing the slow period as a negative, use it to ultimately make your business better. Start by looking at these key areas and asking yourself these important questions.

FACILITY

Is everything in your facility working and up to your brand's standards? Even

though there are ongoing repairs and maintenance throughout the year, create a checklist to use during the downtime to analyze your facility closely. You don't want to discover a broken door or a dangerous pothole in the parking lot when you are showing a unit to potential renters. "We always want our tenants to feel secure, so we pay extra attention to every detail to ensure our facility is in tip-top shape. The simplest issues can either prevent people from renting or will chase good tenants away," says Robinson. "I check over everything our customers may experience from making sure every unit has a secure lock to checking that all of our systems are working properly, such as gates, surveillance cameras and online payments."

John Manes, co-owner of Pinnacle Storage Properties, with a total of

12 properties located in the greater Houston area, San Antonio, Dallas, East Texas and College Station, also suggests spring-cleaning your office so you're ready to hit the ground running when business is at its peak. He suggests adding amenities to enhance your customers' experience. "Organize and clean out your office," he says. "Ensure you have a supply of bottled water, coffee or anything to cater to your customer's experience." Manes says the average self-storage customer is a 30- to 55-year-old female. "You want to do nice things with them in mind," he suggests. In addition to the water and coffee, consider having a basket of fresh fruit or granola bars for people on the go, or a mini-fridge of sodas and lemonade for the hottest days. Plus, everyone loves to take advantage of a bowl of wrapped chocolates, lollipops or mints.

Ask yourself:

- What types of maintenance or repairs does my building need? What can easily be amended and what needs a professional? (roofs, gutters, gates, doors, bollards)
- Are the units clean and in working order?
- Is the parking lot safe and landscape appealing? Now is a good time to plan and schedule services before the weather warms up.
- Do the lights, fire alarms, extinguishers, security cameras and computer systems work?
- Is there proper signage and is it visible?
- What amenities can I add to enhance my customers' experience?

STAFF

Study your employees. Do you have enough staff members with the right skill sets to keep things running smoothly when things get hectic? You may find that they need a refresher course in customer service or a webinar about how to close a sale. There are various free options available on the internet.

Perhaps you need to give your part-time workers a few more hours or hire additional staff. "[Easy Stop Storage] typically likes to hire a part-time assistant manager during our busy season. This allows an extra hand to help conduct maintenance-related tasks and occasional office help if [I] happen to be

Study your employees. Do you have enough staff members with the right skill sets to keep things running smoothly when things get hectic? You may find that they need a refresher course in customer service or a webinar about how to close a sale.

out of the office," says Robinson.

Ward, on the other hand, says that his staff structuring for his facilities remains the same year-round because his business model is to hire a married couple to manage each facility. "They live onsite in apartments as part of their management package," he explains. "By giving them a sense of ownership, they work hard to make the business successful no matter the time of year." Ward says although his managers are handy, he works with them to identify problems and budget for any work in need of a professional. He recommends doing bigger projects during your slow time to keep inconvenience for your customers and staff to a minimum.

Manes performs annual evaluations after the year-end numbers come out around this same time. Would it be easier for your organization to follow suit? Look at how you conduct assessments. Are there ways you can help your managers be successful year-round? Think about it now to plan for next year. Manes provides his managers with a monthly P&L statement and

they look at a year-end report during their annual evaluation. "It is one thing to say that a facility is doing well," he explains, "and another to look at the numbers. This way, they know all year long if they are doing well; there are no surprises." Knowing how you're doing on an ongoing basis helps direct down-time decisions.

Ask yourself:

- Do I need to hire additional staff?
- Does my staff have the skills needed for busy season? Is there some training or direction I can provide?
- Which maintenance or repair projects can my staff handle?
- What information can I provide to help my staff be successful?
- When are my evaluations scheduled? Should I change how, the way or when I conduct them?

MARKETING

Robinson, who has a professional background in corporate marketing, takes a holistic approach and not only looks at what he can do in the community but also what he and his staff can



do in day-to-day business practices. He says, "It's all marketing. Everything from pricing to the way your facility looks, and the way people are greeted every time they walk through the door." Robinson says that he uses social media marketing extensively, ensures his website's SEO is up-to-date and continues marketing in traditional channels such as print, radio and TV.

"[Easy Stop Storage] has a marketing team that provides us with the tools," he explains. "So, I have time to identify more focused, market-based strategies such as community groups, events and other local opportunities for outreach." In addition to looking for ways to get out into your community, research the social media platforms or other digital marketing tactics your competitors are using and adjust your efforts. See what they are doing to garner follower engagement and experiment with your own customer base.

Maybe they do a funny dog meme every Monday that gets a lot of likes and shares; try something similar to see what kind of response you get.

Ward also uses the slower time to ramp up marketing for the busy season. Sports radio ads work well for his demographic, so he runs those on a frequent basis. His facility also participates in a lot of community events and provides monthly specials for its customers. "We always do our best to keep our name out there," he explains. When time allows, Ward says he instructs his staff to learn what apartment communities, residences or businesses there are within the five-mile radius around their facility. During slower times, since he has two managers on staff with each couple, one can do outreach while the other oversees the facility. "We do the footwork and take promotional items, like cups, bags and koozies, to apartment managers and

other businesses," Ward says. "This way, we develop relationships with the people closest to our facility."

Ask yourself:

- Do I have a website? If yes, is it functioning well? Click through all your tabs and links to see if they work. If no, look at your budget and take this time to get something up on the Internet or hire a professional.
- Is my SEO up-to-date? See how you rank on different search engines. Search keywords and phrases to see what you can add to your website.
- What is our social media presence? Is it effective? Take the time to study the free analytics provided by the platforms you use.
- Do I have a digital email marketing campaign or a way to easily communicate with customers? If not, check out Constant Contact or Mailchimp.
- What community engagements are available? Are there teams I can sponsor or nonprofit fundraisers I can support?
- Who lives and works within a five-mile radius of the facility? How can I reach them?

Just like the Chamber of Commerce organizes events at different businesses—become your own chamber and do that yourself.



EVENTS

Another way to shore up your business during the slow season is to hold events. While getting out into the community is important, an event at your facility will bring people onto your property. "Just like the Chamber of Commerce organizes events at different businesses—become your own chamber and do that yourself," suggests Manes. "Bring people to your store now while it is slow, so when they need someone later, they remember you."

For weekday events, Manes suggests marketing to professionals like real estate agents and bankers. Host networking lunches or a business after-hours meet and greet. Collaborate with local restaurants for a weekly give-away. Have people drop off their business cards for a chance to receive a free meal or two. Partner with marketing experts or visual designers and offer free "hour of power" workshops for professionals that cover everything from social media marketing, SEO and tips for a better website to easy ways to create print or

continued on page 20



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Weekend events are for family and the community at large. Manes suggests hosting an event around pets. "Do a pet adoption day with your local SPCA or greyhound rescue but add a pet-wash component and have a vet or two in attendance," he says. Another event could be to enlist your local police, fire and rescue departments to host a "Touch a Truck" event, which allows kids to experience a firetruck, or other vehicle, up close and personal. A mini artisan fair, along with face painting and food, will also attract a crowd.

Ask yourself:

- What events are popular in my community? How can I use that information to create my own event?
- What businesses or professionals can I collaborate with to host week-day events?
- What demographics am I trying to get into my facility? What event would interest them?
- Are there any fundraising efforts we can host for a local charity?
- How big of an event can I handle?

REVENUE MANAGEMENT

When planning for pricing, you want to ensure that you are renting your storage units for what they are actually worth. This price will fluctuate with the availability, demand or urgency of the renter. Use your downtime to gear up by studying your competitors. Secretly shop your competitors to get information or follow Ward's lead. His managers call or visit neighboring facilities to talk shop and learn about their competitors' pricing trends. Once they report back, he works with them on setting up the appropriate pricing strategy. "Some managers are more giving of information than others, but we learn a lot from the ones who choose to share," he says.

Another tactic to employ is to look at your competitors' websites to see if they are publishing their rates. If they are, consider doing that yourself. Save the trouble of constantly updating your website by publishing your "starting at" rate to catch a consumer's attention and get them on the phone or in the door to close the sale. "We're always evaluating the market around us to know how to best position our facility," Robinson explains. Knowing what



Specials and discounts can also increase your occupancy rate going into busy season; however, you want to ensure that you aren't leaving money on the table, so do the numbers and plan accordingly.

pricing structure you will follow when a customer rents via the phone, website or as a walk-in will ensure you are getting the best rate in each instance.

Specials and discounts can also increase your occupancy rate going into busy season; however, you want to ensure that you aren't leaving money on the table, so do the math and plan accordingly. Some ideas include lifestyle discounts for veterans and students or a percentage off a long-term, paid-in-full lease. Other options include free resources, like the use of dollies or free locks, and referral discounts to incentivize existing customers to bring in new tenants.


Ask yourself:

- What are my competitors' prices?
- What is the best way to get information about my competitors?

- Do my competitors publish rates?
- How can I structure my prices based on availability, demand and urgency?
- What are some specials and promotions that make financial sense for my facility?

While it is a year-long commitment to ensure your facility is profitable, use downtime and a little bit of elbow grease to prepare for busy season and set your facility up for success! ■

Director of Marketing and Communications for TSSA, Tracie Seed joined the team in September 2018. She is a former senior editor of a lifestyles publication and also is a freelance writer and artist. In addition, Seed has marketing, communications and managerial experience in the restaurant, non-profit and retail industries.



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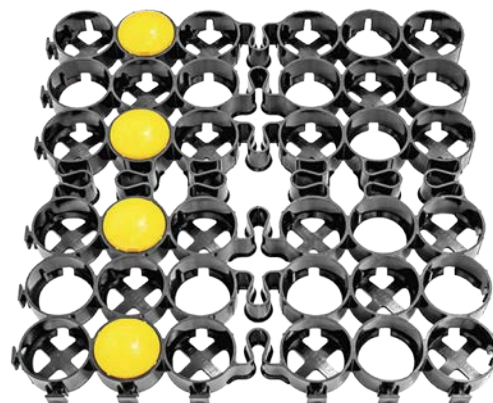
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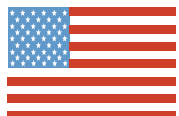
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Creating an Emergency Manual

by Jennifer Jones, Self-Storage News Managing Editor

In “What’s Beyond the Horizon?,” we discussed a high-level view of what it takes to create a plan to prepare for, and recover from, disasters.

PLANNING STEPS

There are so many different situations that can happen and so many details that should be included in the plan, that covering everything in a single article is difficult. Here, we break down additional steps:

- Build your team. Who has the knowledge to create a business continuity and disaster recovery plan?
- Disasters that damage a facility can be numerous:
 - ▶ Tenant-stored hazardous chemical caught fire
 - ▶ Tenant-stored hazardous chemicals leaked through their unit into others' units and ruined the contents
 - ▶ Fire
 - ▶ Hurricane
 - ▶ Tornado
 - ▶ Flood
 - ▶ Cyberattack
 - ▶ Employee Theft
 - ▶ Human Error—database wiped; virus downloaded
 - ▶ Vandalism
 - ▶ Break-ins
- Develop a shelter plan. Where will your employees or tenants who are onsite shelter or go during a disaster?
- What steps can be implemented to mitigate risk (fire extinguishers, etc.)? What maintenance items are on the list? A well-maintained facility will have fewer issues in the event of a disaster.
- Lost revenue: Do you have enough cash on hand to operate in the case of lost income until you can reopen?
- Talk to your insurance company. Know what your coverages and deductibles are. Do you have enough cash on hand to cover your deductibles?
- Develop a communications plan
 - ▶ Who will have a list of all current tenants and be responsible for contacting them?
 - ▶ What will your social media strategy be?
- Develop a list of vendors:
 - ▶ Insurance
 - ▶ Dumpsters
 - ▶ Porta potty
 - ▶ Contractors
 - ▶ Electricians
 - ▶ IT assistance, if not inhouse
 - ▶ Computer and other hardware that is leased and could be replaced by the vendor if destroyed
 - ▶ Current operational vendors (software, gates, security, locks, etc.)
- Develop a training plan for employees
 - Determine what happens with your operations. In “Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning for IT Professionals,” author Susan Snedaker recommends several questions, including:
 - How would the department function if desktops, laptops, servers, email and internet access were unavailable?
 - What single points of failure exist? What risk controls or risk management systems are currently in place?
 - What are the critical outsourced relationships and dependencies?
 - During a disruption, what work-arounds are there for key business processes?
 - What is the minimum number of staff needed and what functions would they need to carry out?
 - What are the key skills, knowledge or expertise needed to recover?



- What critical security or operational controls are needed if systems are down?

RESOURCES

Ready.gov website, offers software in its “Business Continuity Planning Suite.” Other business continuity software vendors include ClearView, Continuity Logic, Fusion and Sungard Availability Services.

The TSSA website has forms, advice and articles you can read through to help identify different situations and solutions. I highly recommend reading, “Developing Your Disaster Plan” by Grow Your Storage. It details information about a fire, but will help you create detailed plans for each situation. I also recommend “Crisis Handled” where industry peers share their experiences and solutions. The legal articles highlighted in that section tell you what your legal obligations are in the event of a disaster. All of the above can be found on the TSSA website under Resources/ Hurricane and Disaster Relief. ■



Top Five Pro Marketing Strategies for the Busy Season

by Tracie Seed, TSSA Director of Marketing and Communications

Some summertime, there is more heating up in Texas than temperatures. With families moving, kids vacating colleges and homeowners cleaning, business speeds up in the self-storage industry, so you don't want to create a marketing plan on the fly. To prepare, use the prior season to develop and execute the lion's share of your marketing plan. To assist us in listing the top five marketing strategies for the busy season, we enlisted Tommy Nguyen, COO for StoragePug, a self-storage industry software, website design and marketing company.

1. START EARLY. According to Nguyen, complete your plan at least three months prior. "March is the prime time to plan for the busy season," he says. "Develop your promotions, website content or social media posts, so come the busy season, you'll be ready to execute." Create print ads or digital content for your big news or events and schedule as much as you can. Develop graphics with Canva, a free, online design program. Find no-cost, copyright-free stock photos at pxhere.com and edit images at befunky.com, also free.

2. KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY. Use the slow season to study your demographics. Target your marketing efforts by finding out who lives within a five-mile radius of your facility. For example, young professionals tend to be digitally-minded and will shop for a facility via Twitter, Yelp or even Instagram. Older generations typically opt for Facebook, radio and print publications. "Get out into your community and see who lives and works there," suggests Nguyen. "Figure out what makes you special and sets you apart from your competition. Speak to that." Place flyers in local coffee shops, trade storage space with a local radio station for advertisement and introduce yourself to your neighboring businesses. "You want to be the person they refer to when their customers are looking for self storage."



3. BE CONSISTENT. Choose at least one social media platform, set up a page and develop a consistent posting schedule. "Many people go gung-ho at the start by posting seven times a week. Then drop to three and eventually to not at all," he explains. "It's best to establish a nice cadence by maintaining your account consistently." Even if you only post twice a month, keep up with it. Customers see your post history and know that your business is active. Pages that show months, or even years, of inactivity give the impression of neglect. There are free social media management tools to ensure your big promos are ready to fly without a second thought: Hootsuite, Buffer, SocialOomph and TweetDeck, to name a few.

4. GO DIGITAL. If you don't have a modern website, now is a good time to either update your old one or create a new one. There are several designers listed on TSSA's online Vendor Locator. You can also enlist a tech-savvy employee to set up a site using online templates from services such as WordPress, Weebly and Wix. While you

can set up a site for free, for a more streamlined, professional presentation, buy your domain name, which can cost as little as \$10 per year. Use SEO keywords in your website copy to increase your visibility and register it (for free) with search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo.

5. SET YOUR METRICS. Nguyen suggests that by setting up measurable metrics, you will know what works, which will help you plan. "In traditional print ads or even billboards, you can create a special phone number or email address to track that specific ad," he says. "You may have your managers ask new customers how they found you." If you have an email strategy, use an online platform such as Constant Contact. You can see how many people open, click or unsubscribe, giving you a clear picture of what messages are and aren't working.

Today's marketplace is competitive, but you can stay ahead of the competition with a solid, prepared marketing plan for your self-storage business. ■

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Top Five Ways Managers Prepare for the Busy Season

by Jennifer Jones, Self-Storage News Managing Editor

Spring cleaning is an apt description of the variety of things that encompass getting ready for summer. After emerging from those cold winter months, it's time to get energized about everything that needs to be done to get ready for the busy season. Let's get started!

1. MAINTENANCE: Make sure your facility is well maintained and all units are rentable. You want to put your best foot forward when it comes to the facility and first impressions, whether they're about a person or a place, always make a lasting impression. You may have your own maintenance checklist, but here are some things to get you going and not forget about.

- ▶ Check for broken items.
- ▶ Check your doors for damage.
- ▶ Touch up paint or repaint.
- ▶ Check latches for damage.
- ▶ Check lights in the available units.
- ▶ Check lights in the facility and halls.
- ▶ Inspect halls, floors and ceilings for damage.
- ▶ Is your gate fully operational? Does it move smoothly?
- ▶ Are the gate stops working?
- ▶ Do a maintenance check on the

HVAC system.

- ▶ Does the HVAC system work appropriately and is it prepared for the heat of summer? Change filters as needed.
- ▶ Check landscaping. Remove dead plants, trash and weeds. Plant new shrubs or flowers to keep your landscape looking top notch.
- ▶ Check for water leaks in restrooms and sprinkler system.
- ▶ Check security cameras to ensure operational.
- ▶ Check fire extinguishers.
- ▶ Check smoke alarms.
- ▶ Check for evidence of insects or rodents.
- ▶ Pressure wash driveways, dumpsters and trash area.
- ▶ Inspect driveways. Seal any cracks and fix pot holes.
- ▶ Inspect the roof for any damage before heavy spring thunderstorms roll in.

2. MYSTERY SHOP YOUR COMPETITORS. Perform a mystery shop to determine what your competitors are charging so you can be competitive. What are nearby storage facilities charging for their

units? Look at what type of facility they have compared to yours. Do they have a brand-new Class A facility, but yours is a few years old or vice versa? Compare apples to apples when you can (e.g., their 10' x 10' climate controlled to your 10' x 10' climate controlled).

3. ADJUST RATES. If your rates are considerably less than your competitors, then you will lose money in the busy season. If your rates are too high, you risk low occupancy when potential tenants go with a cheaper competitor down the street. Talk to the owner about what you found during your mystery shopping, what your current rates are and what kind of traffic (foot, calls and website views) you're seeing.

4. CHECK FOR DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS. Tenants who are not paying are not producing revenue. Though it isn't always easy to foreclose on customers, especially if you've gotten to know and like them, it's essential to foreclose on units and hold auctions when necessary to free up delinquent units for paying customers.

5. PREPARE COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS. The research you gained during your mystery shopping can help you determine your messaging to tenants and on social media platforms. Think about groups of people you can target with social media campaigns depending on where you live (college students, movers, businesses, apartments, schools, new home construction). What would you say to these different groups of people and what kind of social media campaign can you plan out ahead of time and schedule leading up to, and during, your busy season?

Whether you are in a market with an abundance of supply or a lack thereof, by doing a little spring cleaning, you can ensure that your facility is ready for high occupancy. ■



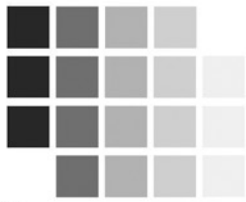
Legal Seminar in Houston January 2019 Packs a Full House

Connie Heyer, TSSA legal counsel, spoke to a full house about the legal ins and outs of self storage, while also taking time out to answer attendees' questions and delve deeper into the agenda topics. Attendees had the opportunity to hear about practical scenarios from a legal perspective. Everyone left happy and ready to take on legal challenges that will undoubtedly come their way! ■



1. More than 100 TSSA members showed up ready to dig in and learn the dos and don'ts from the legal expert. **2.** The legal expert herself, TSSA legal counsel Connie Heyer. **3.** Dan Spofford of Yeomans Realty with sponsors Donna Morgan-Esquivel and Lyndsay LeDoux of SelfStorageAuctions.com. **4.** Megan Dybowski of Trusted Storage Professionals talks with sponsor Bill Bellomy of Bellomy & Co. **5.** More and more attendees are coming with laptops or tablets to make notes in their own words for later reference. **6.** David Starr of Rent A Space visits with sponsors Ralph Ramsey and Tommy Forsythe of Independent Bank. **7.** Joe Lindsey of TPS Storage, Ye Yuan of Sinotex Properties and Katy Bracewell of Tall Pines Lake Conroe Storage came ready to learn!

PLEASE NOTE: If you couldn't make one of this year's legal seminars, remember that TSSA recorded the audio from last year's seminar and synced it up with the slide presentation. That ongoing resource, broken up into short segments by topic, can be viewed at no charge in the Legal section of the Resource Library. You will need to log in to view it. www.txssa.org.



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JONES ROAD COMMERCIAL STORAGE & WAREHOUSE

DEC 21—This year, Jones Road
Commercial Storage & Warehouse
in Bryan, TX participated in the
Blessings in Bags program, which
benefited 1,900 local families.

#blessingsinbags
#bryantx



MINI-STORAGE MESSENGER PUBLISHER RIDES IN ROSE BOWL PARADE

JAN 1—Member Poppy Behrens of
MiniCo and publisher of the *Mini-
Storage Messenger* on horseback in
the annual Rose Bowl Parade.

#flowersANDhorses
#newyearswishes

SIX MILE STORAGE

JAN 3—A special shout out to TSSA
member Six Mile Storage in Port
Lavaca for its participation in the
Tree of Angels Ceremony in memory
of families and friends of victims of
violent crimes. This is an example of
another admirable way our members
support their communities!

CUBBY HOLE

JAN 8—Another TSSA member
doing some amazing work in its
community! Thank you for the
work you do to support The First
Tee of the Piney Woods. Did you
know that they have given and
volunteered with The First Tee for
many years? The First Tee stands to
teach kids in the program nine core
values including honesty, respect,
confidence, responsibility and more.

Using Data to Be Prepared

by Will Sanford, STR

Optimizing rate. Increasing occupancy. Maximizing yield. These are daily areas of focus for the savvy self-storage operator.

But while it is important to focus on the daily routines—marketing, sales, customer retention, maintenance and security—that can directly impact those aforementioned metrics, it is often the unforeseen risks looming on the horizon that can affect your facility the most.

For business owners and operators, it is important that you are prepared for these unexpected circumstances, especially common ones such as natural disasters and economic threats (new competitors).

With history as our guide, we've learned that we can lessen the impact of even the most formidable of threats if we are prepared.

CATASTROPHIC HURRICANE POSES THREATS, AS WELL AS OPPORTUNITIES

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey, a Category 4 hurricane, inflicted more than \$125 billion in damage in the Houston area, primarily from flooding triggered by catastrophic rainfall, which amounted to 60-plus inches in some areas.

This flooding caused mass closures of self-storage facilities across the Houston metro area. For instance, Public Storage temporarily closed 115 properties totaling 8.4 million net rentable square feet (NRSF) in Houston and its surrounding areas. Extra Space closed another 30 facilities comprising 2.6 million NRSF. Many more facilities from smaller operators reported closings because of flooding as well.¹

However, most self-storage facilities, including those operated by Public Storage and Extra Space, reopened after limited closure and provided a much-needed source of storage space as tens of thousands of housing and business units underwent clean-up efforts. Many facilities across the area offered free storage space to residents impacted by the storm.

For the majority of facilities, there was positive news for self-storage performance in the aftermath. When it was over, occupancy across the Houston metro area increased 5.5 percent to an absolute level of 89.6 percent, driven by September's 12.3 percent spike in move-ins as a percentage of units available. Many properties that were in lease-up in the wake of Harvey had unoccupied units, thus increasing occupancy rates in the area.

CATASTROPHE PREPAREDNESS

The National Hurricane Survival Initiative² lists several ways operators can prepare for a hurricane. First is to *identify the risk*. Knowing the likelihood of your facility being hit by a hurricane or other strong weather event can be as simple as following local or national news sources, such as NOAA.org or Weather.com. Also know any electrical hazards, chemical hazards or fire hazards at your property.

Next, ensure your property is protected and hazards are secured, including covering windows with plywood, having sandbags ready to place in areas prone to flooding, securing electronics and turning off utilities.³

Protect important documents and information by sealing paper copies (and any electronic storage sources) in waterproof containers. Assure that your employees are prepared and that they are safeguarded just as well as your facility.

After the brunt of the weather passes, there are several things you may need: generators, gas for vehicles, tarps, cleaning supplies, drinking water, a camera for documenting damages and a tool kit. Keep these items in stock and check/fix/replace as needed before every storm season.

As a result of measures such as these, amongst others, many self-storage facilities in Houston were prepared and able to quickly reopen and serve as a critical means of relief in the storm's aftermath.

A NOTE FROM TSSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GINNY SUTTON:

STR announced on February 7 that the company is exiting the self-storage sector. TSSA appreciates their partnership and thoughtful delivery of operating and development data over the past year.

NEW COMPETITORS DON'T ALWAYS DAMPEN PERFORMANCE

Many facility operators worry that the opening of a new self-storage facility nearby will negatively impact their own facility's performance. They are concerned that any increase in new supply will decrease occupancy and potentially hamper rate.

Often times, their fears have been justified. For instance, in the Plano Murphy submarket of Dallas, there was a 27.5 percent increase in net rentable square feet (NRSF) during a 12-month period that contributed to a 5.1 percent decrease in occupancy and a 1.5 percent decline in rate.⁴ Again, these are full-sample metrics which account for all properties in a market, including those in lease-up and those that are stabilized (achieved 12+ months of occupancy 85 percent or greater).

In the Austin-US-290/I-35 area submarket, NRSF increased 20.4 percent during a 12-month period, while occupancy dropped 17.6 percent. In the South Austin/Airport submarket NRSF increased 21.8 percent and occupancy declined by 7.1 percent.

However, while these anecdotes of supply growth being accompanied by negative performance trends rightfully give caution to owners and operators, these negative scenarios are not always the case. The Austin CBD submarket, for example, added 37.2 percent NRSF, while occupancy (+0.1 percent) and rate (+0.2 percent) remained level.

In the Seguin submarket of San Antonio, there was a 5.3 percent NRSF increase during a 12-month period, but the submarket experienced a 12 percent increase in occupancy. In Southeast San Antonio, there was a 2.9 percent increase in NRSF that coincided with a 7.7 percent increase in occupancy and a 4.5 percent increase in rate.

So, while a new competitor may be intimidating, they don't always bring gloom to your facility's performance.

NEW COMPETITOR PREPAREDNESS

The U.S. Small Business Administration⁵ lists several things that can be done to prepare for a new competitor.

1. Don't get into a price war. While it's possible, most existing customers are not going to move to a 10x10 storage unit across town for a \$10 per month savings. So, don't panic.
2. Get to know the competition. What are they doing differently? What are they good at? Not good at? Read their reviews online, review their web presence (website, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) and talk with others in the community familiar with the new kid on the block.
3. Focus on your core customer group (your niche) and cater to what your customers need and not what your competition is doing. Talk to your customers (and, if possible, those customers that have left for the new facility). Talk to your associates.
4. Capitalize on what makes you unique and what the competitor might show as a weakness. Are you a small, local business? Do you have climate-controlled units? RV parking? Electrical hook-ups in units?

As the new competitor opens, doing these things could potentially decrease the chance of negatively impacting your facility's occupancy and rate. Furthermore, getting to know

Submarket Supply Growth and Performance Snapshot



% NRSF Growth % Occ Change* % Rate Change*

Austin Market

Austin CBD	37.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Austin, Northwest/Arboretum	2.3%	-5.8%	-3.7%
Austin US-290/I-35 Area	20.4%	-17.6%	-3.3%
Round Rock/Georgetown	0.0%	-2.4%	-0.2%
San Marcos/Austin Surrounding	2.2%	-3.2%	-1.9%
South Austin/Airport	21.8%	-7.1%	0.2%

Dallas Market

Frisco-McKinney	18.4%	-0.4%	1.2%
Mesquite-Greenville	5.3%	-4.0%	-2.9%
North Dallas	0.0%	11.2%	-3.2%
Plano Murphy	27.5%	-5.1%	-1.5%
Waxahachie	3.2%	-4.6%	-4.1%

San Antonio Market

New Braunfels	2.6%	8.7%	-9.3%
North San Antonio	8.9%	-8.2%	0.8%
Northwest Extended	3.8%	-4.5%	2.4%
Seguin	5.3%	12.0%	-1.1%
Southeast San Antonio	2.9%	7.7%	4.5%

*All performance metrics are Full Sample, 12 month moving average, year over year % change

your business and customer group can only help your business, and you could come out of this exercise stronger than before!

It's important that we regularly look past the grind of everyday business, where we focus on daily routines that can improve performance, to be ready for those other threats looming on the horizon. While natural disasters and new competitors can both have a negative impact on operations, there are things owners and operators can do to be ready. Preparedness can help owners and operators turn a threat into an opportunity. ■

Will Sanford is a research analyst at STR. He can be reached at wsanford@str.com.

- 1 Adapted from: <https://www.insideselfstorage.com/safety/self-storage-businesses-impacted-rally-wake-hurricane-harvey>
- 2 National Hurricane Survival Initiative. <https://hurricanesafety.org/prepare/>
- 3 This list is not fully inclusive and merely serves as a starting point. For more information, please visit, [HurricaneSafety.org](https://www.hurricanesafety.org), [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov) or your state/local emergency preparedness office.
- 4 All performance metrics derived from analysis of year-over-year trends in Square Foot Occupancy and Square Foot Rate on a 12-month moving average basis. All data is Full-Sample, which includes properties that are in lease-up, as well as those that are stabilized (achieved 12 consecutive months of 85 percent or greater occupancy).
- 5 U.S. Small Business Administration. <https://www.sba.gov/blogs/got-competition-6-tips-dealing-new-competitor-block>

Five TSSA Lease Essentials Every Manager Needs to Know

Reprinted from Nov/Dec 2016 *Self-Storage News*

by **Connie N. Heyer, TSSA Legal Counsel**



How much time do you spend with a customer explaining the most important parts of the lease? Do you know the most important parts of the lease? It is a tenant's responsibility to read and familiarize himself with the TSSA lease terms, but it is in a self-storage facility owner and manager's best interest to have tenants who understand the terms of the lease. Managers need to be able to answer a tenant's questions about the lease and, time permitting, walk through some of the more important provisions of the lease during signing.

Below are some of the more important provisions of the lease such as releasing the facility of liability, how either party can terminate the lease, what remedies you have when a tenant breaches the terms of the lease and more. Let's explore the FIVE GREATEST TSSA LEASE PARAGRAPHS OF ALL TIME!

5. PARAGRAPH 1 TENANT INFORMATION

Who is the tenant? It may come as a surprise how many mix-ups can happen with this basic informational paragraph. The tenant is the person whose name is on the first line of TSSA lease paragraph 1 (tenant's last name and

Managers need to be able to answer a tenant's questions about the lease and, time permitting, walk through some of the more important provisions of the lease during signing.

first name). The tenant signs the lease. The tenant is the only person legally responsible for rent and other lease obligations. The tenant is the one to whom you must send any legal notice.

A tenant is NOT a mother who says, "My son is moving and I'm helping him get a lease settled. Let me write my son's name in as tenant but sign my name and he'll be in this afternoon and you can create a new lease for him to sign." The correct answer to that is, "Thank you, but the listed tenant must sign the lease and is legally bound by its terms. If you'd like a unit today, you may be the listed tenant and sign the lease. I'm happy to put the lease in the son's name at a later date if you both come back in. You have to come in to sign off on the change and he has to come in to sign a new lease."

When leasing to a business, the legal name of the business should be listed in the first line of paragraph one, and the business name should be listed at the signature line with the employ-

ee's printed name and signature under it, as in "Main Street Widget Company, by Jane Doe, authorized agent [and signed by Jane Doe]."

Paragraph 1 also contains a blank for a Social Security number. If you rent to military personnel, it is very difficult to verify military status without one, should you need to.

Paragraph 1 also contains a blank in which the tenant may list names of people to whom you may provide access. This access may be provided at your option, but it is not mandatory.

Finally, paragraph one lists emergency contacts for the tenant. There are several "default" emergency contacts (like spouses, siblings and adult children) to whom you may, at your option, provide access if the tenant dies, is in jail, is missing or is incapacitated (the emergency contact must sign an affidavit swearing one of these events has happened). The tenant may

continued on page 37

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— **Larry Easley | President, Storage Management Associates**
TSSA Board of Directors 2012-2015



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— **Jay Kanter | O'Conner Self Storage**
TSSA Board of Directors 2008-2012



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continued from page 34

also list specific names and contact information for additional emergency contacts.

4. PARAGRAPH 4 “DOLLARS AND DATES”

What is the monthly rent (paragraph 4a)? What day is it due (paragraph 4b)? What are late charges, NSF check charges, locking charges if the tenant leaves his space unlocked and cleaning charges? All these charges and more are itemized in paragraph 4. This paragraph also explains that if the lease covers multiple units, certain charges are “per unit” like late charges.

3. “NOTICE TO TENANT AND RELEASE”

This is the bolded, italicized, and in some sections, all-caps language at the bottom of the first page of the TSSA lease (also repeated in Paragraph 20). It is packed with important liability language.

This paragraph references late charges. It makes clear that there are no representations of safety or security. It contains a negligence waiver and non-liability language related to bodily injury and property damage. It contains non-liability language for fire, smoke, dust, water, weather, insects, vermin, explosion, utility interruption and theft. Finally, it notes the tenant’s insurance and self-insurance duties. It should always be initialed by the tenant!

2. PARAGRAPH 20 “NONLIABILITY AND RELEASE FOR LOSS OR INJURY; AND INSURANCE”

This paragraph makes clear that there is no bailor/bailee relationship being created. In other words, it makes clear that your facility is not a warehouse and has no possessory duty of safekeeping. So, you are generally not liable for damages from vermin, leaks, etc.

This paragraph also binds the tenant to a \$5,000 cap on the value of stored items. If the tenant stores items worth more than that in the unit without your permission, he is in breach of the lease. This paragraph also makes

Reading the lease all the way through from time-to-time and using the Lease Index in the TSSA Goldbook® (an index of topics and the TSSA lease paragraph in which they are addressed) are also very helpful.

clear that tenants cannot store items of sentimental value. All of this is for both the tenant’s and your protection. Finally, the paragraph outlines the tenant’s duty to purchase insurance if he stores more than \$1,000 in goods in the unit, and notes that the tenant is considered to self-insure for all items not covered by his insurance.

And drumroll please....

The greatest TSSA lease paragraph of all time is:

1. PARAGRAPH 24 “LESSOR’S REMEDIES”

In the unlikely event that things go south with a tenant (what constitutes a tenant default is defined in TSSA lease paragraph 23), what are your remedies to recoup your losses, remove the tenant and get a lease-abiding paying tenant in the space? The short answer is that you have many remedies, all outlined by this paragraph.

You may lock an unlocked space. You may overlock, code out and wheel boot for any breaches of the lease. You may give notice to vacate and file for eviction. You may assess any charges due under paragraph 4. You may seize the unit (the steps that constitute seizure are defined in this paragraph). Finally, you may exercise your Chapter 59 foreclosure rights.

HONORABLE MENTION

Paragraph 9: “Termination and Move-Out Notice” This paragraph defines how both you and the tenant may part ways amicably. First, the tenant must comply with any minimum lease term per paragraph 3. If a tenant wants to

move out, he must provide you with at least a 10-day written notice of lease termination/non-renewal via mail, hand delivery or email. If you want the tenant to move out, you must provide him with at least a 15-day written notice of lease termination/non-renewal via mail, email or hand delivery.

Paragraphs 28 and 38 outline the rent due at termination and other termination-related provisions.

For example, the tenant is liable for rent for the remainder of the month of move out, or for 10 days after move-out, whichever is longer. So, for example, if the tenant moves out July 10, the tenant owes full July rent. If the tenant moves out July 25, the tenant owes through August 4 (four days prorated for August).

SUMMARY

Hopefully this “Five Greatest” list has helped highlight some of the more important provisions of the TSSA lease. This article is no substitute for a comprehensive knowledge of all TSSA lease terms. Reading the lease all the way through from time-to-time and using the Lease Index in the TSSA Goldbook® (an index of topics and the TSSA lease paragraph in which they are addressed) are also very helpful. ■

Online Leasing and Paperless Offices: Consider the Pros and Cons

Reprinted from March/April 2018 *Self-Storage News*

by **Connie N. Heyer, TSSA General Counsel**

All modern businesses must determine their preferred level of technology use. Choices abound, from full-time staffed facilities leasing the old-fashioned way with pen and ink to unmanned storage facilities using only websites and kiosks for leasing activity. This article outlines some of the legal and practical advantages and disadvantages of varying levels of technology use to help you make a decision that best suits your business.

ONLINE LEASING

TSSA offers its members the ability to have their customers sign leases online. This is accomplished through TSSA's Blue Moon™ online forms software used with management software and an online leasing platform. True online leasing saves staff time. For example, you may be able to provide an online virtual tour of the facility rather than having an employee physically walk the property with a prospective tenant, as ultimately the employee wouldn't need to spend time assisting the tenant with the tour or to execute a lease.

Online leasing helps you “strike while the iron is hot” by quickly converting a prospect into a tenant. Online platforms typically make it easy for tenants to update their own contact information.

Management software used in tandem with an outline platform automatically tracks inventory of available units and allow tenants the ability to pay their rent 24/7. Some kiosks even capture biometric data from tenants.

Online leasing offers advantages, but as with many things, it also presents challenges. For example, the more technology you use, the more training your employees will need and the more technologically sophisticated your employees will need to be. Technologically-savvy employees means greater pay as well as a smaller pool of potential employees.

Online leasing also removes the hu-

man, personal-service factor, which can be a competitive advantage for a facility employing a great manager. It removes the “eyeballing” factor as well—your ability to simply get a bad feeling from someone who won't answer questions about their storage needs, wants to pre-pay in cash, etc. Online leasing removes opportunities to identify potential red flags. It is more challenging to confirm a tenant's identity with online leasing situations than it is in person when he or she



is handing you a driver's license or other form of ID; the potential for fraud can be greater with online leasing if the tenant does not come into the office before taking possession of a unit.

PAPERLESS OFFICES

Having a “paperless office” may be a nice buzzword, but can be something of a misnomer. Certain things like contracts, unless executed entirely online, require printing and signing, after which they can be scanned and stored. It is unrealistic for most businesses to be entirely paperless. However, some paperwork and paper storage can be avoided through the proper use of technology. Each business owner must determine the right degree of being “paperless” for their own operation.

One of the advantages of using technology to minimize paperwork is less

physical space. You don't need rows of file cabinets, just a scanner and a server. There is less chance of loss with use of technology to store documents; a properly backed-up computer system will mean that you can't lose all your business records through fire, flood, hurricane or other casualty event.

Online records allow much easier access—they can be accessed remotely from almost any location. Online records generally lessen the chance of a misfiled document. Online leasing and digital record storage are eco-friendly as well, which is not only an admirable environmental goal, but also be a competitive advantage. When proper protocols are followed, online record keeping is more secure than storing paper files, which could be more easily accessed. Online records also provides the ability to maintain and retrieve information remotely.

One disadvantage to increased use of technology is the need to keep up with software upgrades as well as computer and server maintenance and cybersecurity. An IT service provider will need to be a key vendor. Your employees will need technology training and must be comfortable using technology.

Paperless offices cannot eliminate human error. No matter what, businesses will need a Plan B (or will simply have to cease technology-dependent operations temporarily) for the inevitable power outages and computer crashes.

In conclusion, from a legal perspective, a lease executed online through a proper online leasing platform is equally as enforceable as a paper lease signed by the landlord and tenant. Also from a legal perspective, a scanned copy of a lease or other document is just as enforceable and admissible in court as an original kept in your paper files. Whether to use online leasing technology, and to what extent to use other technology in your business, is simply a question for each business owner to answer for themselves. ■

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TSSA NETWORKING LUNCHEONS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Details about future luncheons are available on the calendar at txssa.org.

MARCH

6 SAN ANTONIO
The Barn Door Restaurant
8400 North New Braunfels Ave.,
San Antonio, TX 78209
Topic: Effective Property Tax Strategies
Sponsor: Marsh, USA

12 DALLAS
El Fenix
1601 McKinney Ave. Dallas, TX 75202
Topic: Revenue Management
in a Competitive Market
Sponsor: Independent Bank

APRIL

9 CORPUS CHRISTI
Nolan's Restaurant—
NEW LOCATION
4117 S. Staples, #100, Corpus Christi, TX 78411
Topic: TBD
Sponsor: A-Lert Building Systems

11 AMARILLO
Youngbloods Stockyard Café
Downtown
620 SW 16th Street, Amarillo, TX 79101
Topic: TBD
Sponsor: Bedrock Contracting

MAY

2 AUSTIN
Casa Chapala
9041 Research Blvd., Ste. 100, Austin, TX 78758
Topic: Using the TSSA Lease Electronically
Sponsor: StorageAuctions.com

9 HOUSTON
St. Philip Meeting Room
4807 San Felipe, Houston, TX 77056
Topic: TBD
Sponsor: A-Lert Building Systems

NETWORKING LUNCHEON RECAPS



AUSTIN



AUSTIN—Attendees enjoyed networking and listening to Ann Hawkins with STR present performance data for the Austin area. Thank you to our sponsor Blancken Insurance.

Why Should You Attend a TSSA Luncheon?



- ▶ You're probably going to eat lunch anyway, so why not make some new industry connections?
- ▶ Are you building or thinking about building or buying a facility? Come talk to people who've "been there and done that."
- ▶ You'll always hear something that is relevant to the industry. This is especially helpful if you are new to self storage.
- ▶ Since volunteers help plan and organize these events, you always get to hear how your peers approach things.
- ▶ You'll meet the luncheon sponsor and hear a two-minute presentation. They probably offer a product or service that you need right now or will in the future.

Hope to see you at a luncheon soon!

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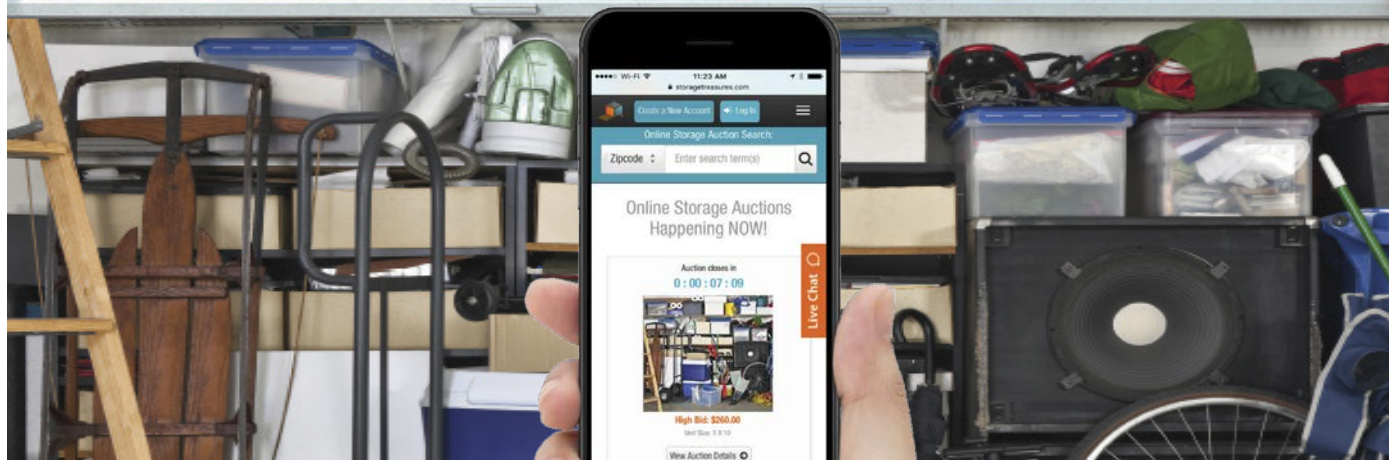
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How a Manager Prepares for Disaster in a Hurricane-Proof Facility

by **Tracie Seed**, *TSSA Director of Communications and Marketing*

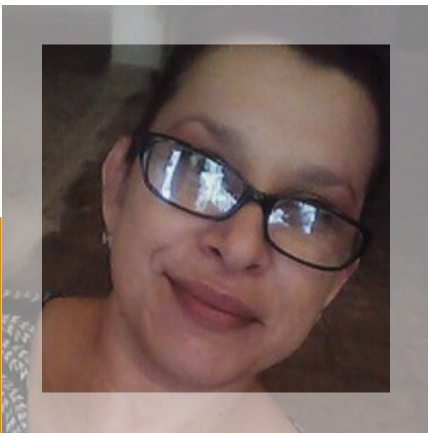
Four years ago, Angela Sandoval stepped into the 1840s building in Galveston, TX, as the site manager of Storage, Inc. The facility, located north of Broadway Avenue and south of the Galveston Channel, has withstood hurricane winds and damaging floods, much associated with island life. “This is my first time working in self storage,” says Sandoval, who maintains a 99 percent occupancy rate. “I come from the education and historical fields. It was my enthusiasm for history that made this building so interesting.”

As Galveston’s only above-ground, 100 percent climate-controlled storage facility, this brick building has truly withstood the test of time. According to Sandoval, its walls are built out of three layers of brick. “Because it is a Texas and National Historical Landmark, the facility’s exterior has remained pretty

In the event of a pending hurricane, Sandoval and others move into action. “We immediately get the call list and contact each tenant to prepare them. If their unit is on the first floor, we give them the option to move their items upstairs.”

much the same during its renovation into a storage facility,” she explains. “It’s a former furniture factory and has survived the great fire of 1885 and the great hurricane and disaster of 1900. It also stood strong against Ike in 2008 and Harvey in 2017.”

When asked about being prepared, Sandoval suggests having a facility primed for disaster before threat arises. “As for fire, our entire facility is non-smoking,” she explains, pointing out that there hasn’t been a fire during her tenure. “We have a state-of-the-art sprinkler system on each floor and always get inspections and change the batteries in smoke detectors. We also have plenty of easily-accessible fire extinguishers throughout.”



ANGELA SANDOVAL

Site Manager, Storage Inc., Galveston, TX

I’ve raised three sons, I am a history buff, and I like to stay home with my animals—five dogs and five cats! I also like to do a lot of handcrafts, such as making earrings and holiday decorations. My current interests include creating steampunk-decorated hats. It started because I made one for my son that had watches, gears, snake skins and other items on it. Now I do it just for fun!

Getting to know...



This historic 1840s building is home to Storage, Inc. in Galveston, TX.

While she says that they have a tornado safety plan to hunker down in one of the structure’s windowless rooms, Sandoval admits that hurricanes are her greatest concern. Not only do they come with dangerous wind speeds, but also the impending threat of flooding. To combat the hazards her location affords, Sandoval, along with two part-time employees, has emergency plans in place. “Fortunately, with hurricanes, we are given much prior warning, so we are well prepared,” says Sandoval. “Sometimes the storms don’t show up, but with hurricanes, you always need to heed warning and take it seriously.”

After its purchase in 2006 by Houstonians Mark and June Harvie, the historic building, touted today as a hurricane-proof facility, was gutted and rebraced with structural steel and

“Another important way to be prepared for disaster is to have a good, well-trained staff who are rational and work well as a team. They are the key to having emergency procedures prepared and followed through.”

floor joists. The original windows and frames were reglazed and returned to their original locations, while the façade windows were replaced with glass designed to withstand up to Category 5 hurricane-force winds and rain.

Once a warning is issued, Sandoval and her staff begin emergency procedures. “We immediately get the call list and contact each tenant to prepare them,” she says. “If their unit is on the first floor, we give them the option to move their items upstairs.” If there aren’t any extra units available, Sandoval allows clients to place their things in a designated area on the second or third floor, which is then partitioned off for security. Next, the staff moves all the business documents and equipment to a higher floor and sandbags the doors. Sandoval suggests saving the original packaging from computers and other valuable electrical equipment so that you can pack everything up safely before storing. Finally, the staff sends the elevator to the fifth floor, locks the doors and gates, and moves to safe ground.

“Another important way to be prepared for disaster is to have a good, well-trained staff who are rational and work well as a team,” Sandoval says, stating she has the best employees in the industry. “They are the key to having emergency procedures prepared and followed through.” ■

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Allan Cain, Owner of Carthage Self Storage and Commercial Leasing, Appointed to Governor's Criminal Justice Advisory Committee

Governor Greg Abbott appointed Allan Cain, owner of Carthage Self Storage and Commercial Leasing, to the Advisory Committee to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments for a four-year term. The committee advises

the board and the director of the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments on matters related to offenders with medical or mental impairments and perform other duties imposed by the board. Cain is a former law enforcement

officer and appointee to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and Texas Commission on Jail Standards. He volunteers as an Ambassador for the Panola Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the Lions Club of Panola County.

Amazing Spaces Celebrates 20 Years

Headquartered in The Woodlands, Amazing Spaces Storage Centers recently celebrated 20 years in business and opened its sixth property in Springwoods and Exxon Campus. Beyond business, the organization focuses on community support. "One of our operational pillars is to give back to the communities," shares Scott Tautenhahn, president. They have collected toiletries and toys, donated supplies and hosted events for area non-profits. Says Ms. Colgin, Manager of the Medical Center, West University location, "We're a close-knit team. We work hard, but we have a lot of fun in the process."



Whether we're coming up with wacky ways to use bubble wrap on National Bubble Wrap Day or hosting our weekly Christmas wrapping parties, we aim to be the best, plain and simple."

FineView Marketing Welcomes New Chief Marketing Officer



Austin-based FineView Marketing welcomed Chuck Vion as its new Chief Marketing Officer in January

2019. Recently serving for more than three years as the marketing director for SiteLink self-storage management software, Vion begins his new tenure by overseeing FineView's overall marketing strategy, implementation of tactical requests and utilization and application of internal and external resources to best serve the company's clients.

"We are very excited to welcome Chuck to FineView Marketing," says Marketing CEO and owner Christina Alvino. "His diverse and dynamic experience will add a high level of creativity, vision and leadership to the team. As we continue to expand, we believe Chuck's extensive background makes him the best fit to head up our marketing team and accomplish our mission to bring independently owned self-storage operators personalized, holistic marketing strategies that refine and elevate their brands."

Imperial Storage Solutions Unveils First Stage of Expansion Plans

Imperial Storage Solutions (formerly Voss Road Storage) in Sugar Land recently unveiled its initial plans for a three-phase expansion. Featuring 58,250 square feet of green solar-powered

buildings, phase one began in January 2019. The move marks the next step in the company's strategy to expand its operations on a nine-acre space recently named Imperial Business Park. The overall expansion includes 381,250 square feet of additional net rentable



square footage space that will feature climate-controlled units, executive office spaces, warehouse units and more. The first expansion phase is scheduled to be completed by January 2020. In addition, Imperial has long-term plans to expand to a second location in Katy.

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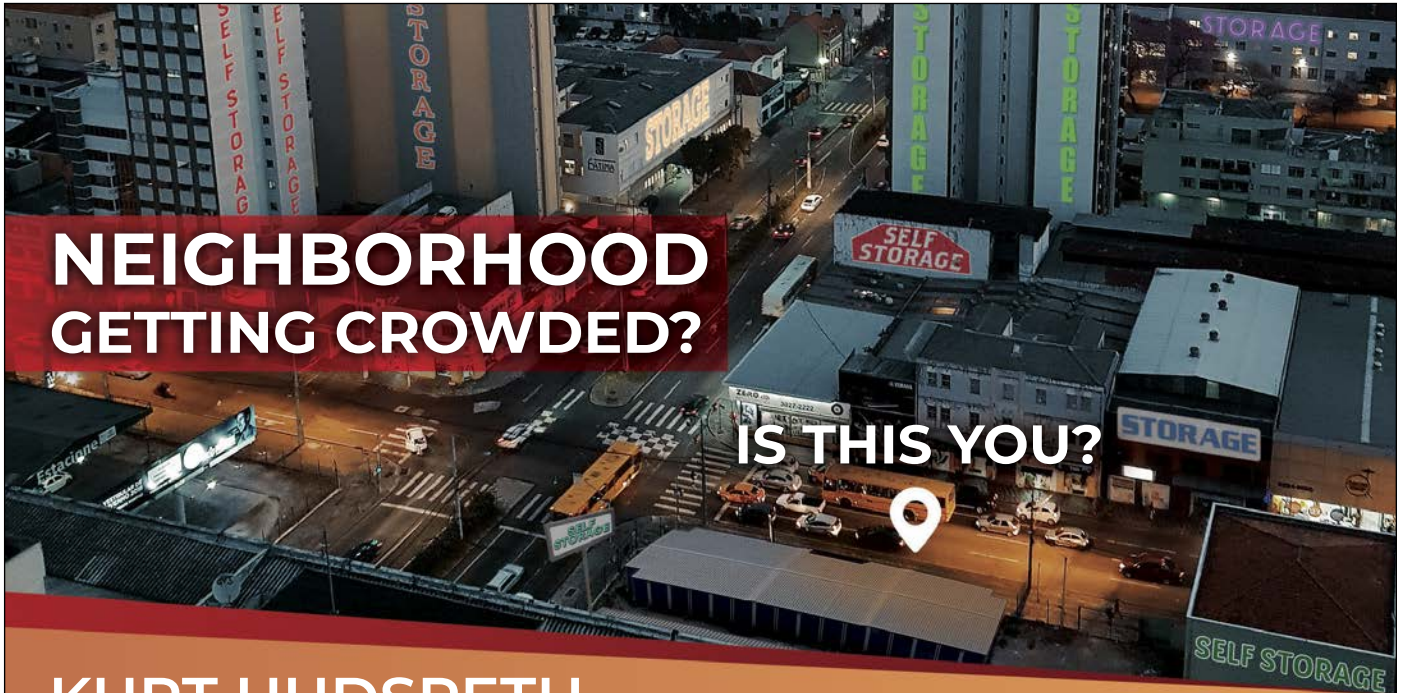
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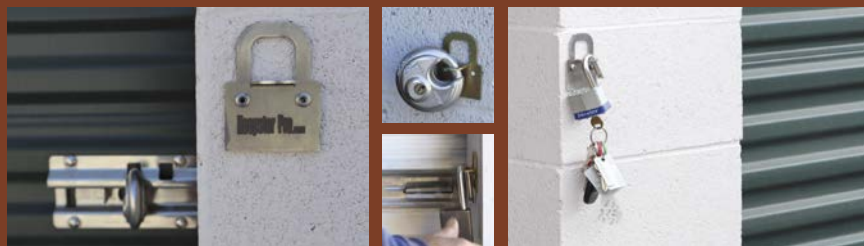
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Rosewood Corporation Names Rick Perdue New President



Dallas real estate executive Rick Perdue has been named president of Rosewood Property Company (RPC).

Perdue has held senior real estate positions since receiving a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from Auburn University and earning his Master of Business Administration from Tulane University in 1997. He spent 17 years with Dallas-based Tonti Properties, more than half of which as head of Development and Acquisitions. In 2014, he moved to

Mill Creek Residential LLC, a leading national multifamily investor, builder and operator. Prior to joining RPC, he was Senior Managing Director at Mill Creek.

"Rick's national experience in real estate investment and acquisitions will be a significant addition to RPC as we have increased our investments around the country," says Flaherty.

Perdue currently serves as a board member of the Real Estate Council where he chaired the Associate Leadership Council and a founding board member of Circuit Trail Conservancy. He has been a CFA charter holder since 2011, is LEED accredited and a licensed real estate broker.

Devon Self Storage's Shannon Dodge Promoted to VP of Construction



In January 2019, Devon Self Storage announced that Shannon Dodge was promoted to Vice President, Construction. Dodge has worked for the

company since 2015. The previous nine years of his career were spent in construction, primarily of self-storage facilities. Dodge will oversee all of the organization's construction, including renovations, additions and conversions.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS, ACQUISITIONS & EXPANSIONS

JLL secured a loan on behalf of Central Southwest Texas Development, LLC for the construction of a 1,311-unit Class-A self-storage property located in Houston's Westchase submarket. The new five-story, 132-350-square-foot storage development is located in a densely-populated area around 15 miles from downtown Houston.

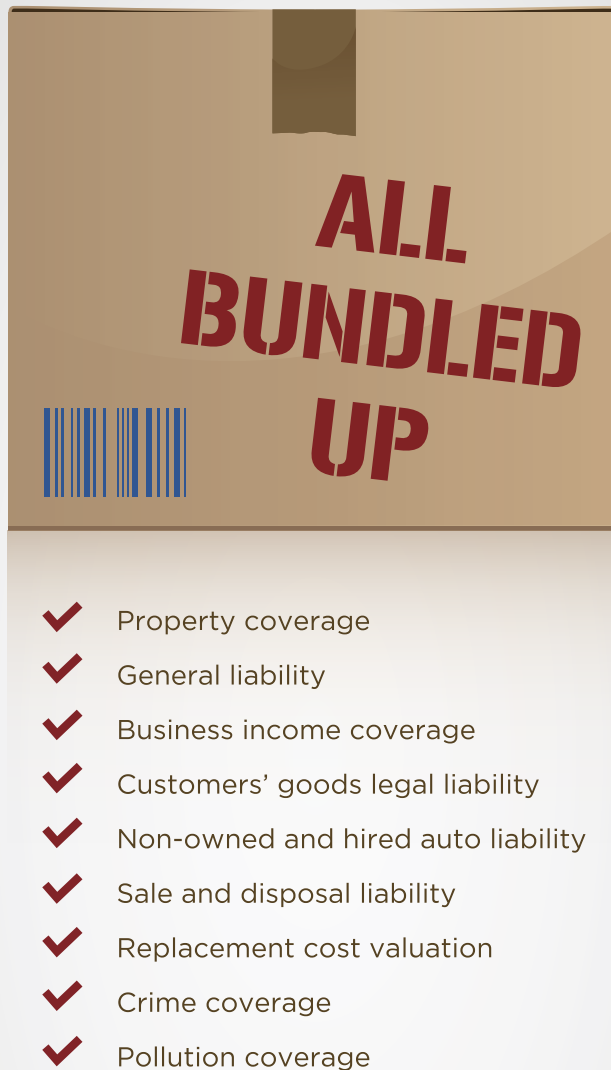
"Self storage has proven itself to be a defensive asset class that remains stable through economic cycles," said Griffin Guthneck, senior vice president at JLL. "There is still quite a bit of demand for quality self-storage product and capital is available to well-located, institutional-quality projects."

Built last year, **PRESTIGE SELF STORAGE IN SUGAR LAND** was sold to Store Space Self Storage. The facility, which is touted as the first and only self-storage business near Riverstone with 100 percent climate-controlled units, has 976 units. The seller, Prestige Organization LLC, was represented by Mellon and Somoza.

ARCO/MURRAY recently completed a 116,000 square-foot self-storage facility for The Jenkins Organization in Frisco. The new facility consists of two buildings, including 5,000 square-feet of climate-controlled wine storage. It also has two vaulted, covered loading areas and a 1,300 square-foot office space complete with a U.S. Postal Service and FedEx shipping center.

LONE STAR STORAGE CENTERS opens a new location in New Braunfels. In February, Lone Star Storage Centers announced the opening of its brand-new, state-of-the-art location in New Braunfels. Located on Loop 337, the property boasts 658 total units with more than 105,000 rentable square feet. Features include climate controlled/standard units, single story, individual door alarms, 24/7 high-definition security cameras, covered RV/boat parking/storage, wide drive and exterior lighting throughout property.

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Bader Company	19
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CSD Realty Company	31
CAPCO Steel, Inc.	Back cover
Chateau Products, Inc.	25
Compound Security Specialists	6
Cubby Hole, Inc.	49
Energy Roofing Solutions	Inside front cover
Everbrite	41
Higginbotham Insurance	48
Keepster Pro	46
Kurt Hudspeth	46
Marcus & Millichap	2
Mini-Management Services	49
OMC Gate Service	49
On the Move	45
Parham Group	28
Realty Tax Consultants	39
Chinrose International	51
Sage Storage Insurance Solutions	5
SBS Construction	1
Self Reliant Solar	21
SiteLink	Inside back cover
Site Safe Security	11
Storage Treasures	14
Store Here	50
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Texas Financial Bank	51
TRUEGrid	22
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Wortham Insurance & Risk Mgmt	6

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OpenTech Appoints New President and Recruits Domain Experts

OpenTech Alliance, Inc., the leading developer of innovative technology solutions for the self-storage industry announced Mike Connolly has been appointed as President of OpenTech Alliance. "Over the past 15 years, Connolly has played a major role in OpenTech's success and growth as an investor, board member, and leader. Connolly has been my professional and personal mentor for over 35 years, without him, OpenTech would never have gotten off the ground. As our business expands and gets more complex, Connolly is the perfect person to keep it running smoothly. At the same time, my job will be to shake things up, growing our business through Internal Innovation, Acquisition, and Partnership. I expect the next 15 years to be even more exciting than the first," stated Robert Chiti, Chairman and CEO of OpenTech Alliance.

Chiti added, "As we planned for Connolly's transition, we also realized

it was time to recruit some talented leaders with deep experience in the areas of Engineering, Sales, and Marketing to help us grow the company and continue to deliver innovative solutions and superior service to our customers."

"Kristi Adams-Gubbels will join as the vice president of product marketing. Her 13 years of self-storage experience from founding USstoragsearch.com to driving marketing strategies for U-Store-It (now CubeSmart) will be instrumental in achieving the company's overall objectives and goals in the years to come.

Roy Pierson as Vice President of Engineering brings extensive experience in product and solution delivery with a focus on cloud computing, security, big data, and technology transformation and innovation. Pierson's experience includes 15 years at Microsoft and extensive work in the area of global reservation systems as well as leading the effort to create valu-

able industry standards for data sharing in the Hospitality industry.

Lastly, Bill Hoffman has joined our team as the Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing. Hoffman brings more than 20 years of strategic sales, marketing, channel and customer success experience with a focus on team building and hands-on experience implementing "game-changing" CRM strategies. Under Hoffman's direction, we have already begun to ramp up our operational tools and implement new focused marketing and sales programs.

Having talented people is a great thing, but the best part about our team is they all share our core values and commitment to *Doing It Right*. I have always heard that growing a successful company is all about people, so I am very optimistic about our team and where they will take OpenTech in the future," stated Chiti.

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INSOMNIAC CIA Names Security101 Their Preferred Self- Storage Access Control Solution

OpenTech Alliance, Inc. announced Security 101 LLC., has joined their growing list of OpenTech Channel Partners. Security 101 LLC., has supported self-storage operators with their access control and security needs for more than eight years and serves customers in the New Hampshire and Maine area. Clif Johnston, the owner of Security 101 LLC., was introduced to OpenTech when one of his customers inquired about their cloud-based access control solution, INSOMNIAC CIA. "When I investigated the hardware componentry, I was really impressed with the forward-thinking design. Captive screws and a unique hinged faceplate allow for easy installation and service, and the customer experience with the bright OLED display, text me my code, and Storage Genie mobile app are what set CIA apart from other solutions available in the self-storage industry," Johnston commented.

Gary Carland, channel development manager for OpenTech Alliance, emphasized the point, "Every technology we develop is designed entirely to help self-storage operators, and in this case, our dealers work smarter and more efficiently." Carland added, "Due to the easy installation process, INSOMNIAC CIA saves both the installer and customer time and money." Carland commented, "The technical support staff at OpenTech is incredible, I am not a ticket in the system and a helpful voice is waiting to assist me every time I call!"

INSOMNIAC CIA gives self-storage operators total control of a single property or hundreds of properties and addresses issues with older PC-based systems including technology, warranty, installation and support. Operators don't have to worry about software updates as the cloud-based software runs the most current version and continues to operate even if your Internet connection goes down. Managers and owners can also gain insights into their renters' behaviors and streamline business operations with predictive maintenance triggers with real-time data visualization and reporting from the OpenTech IoT Control Center. ■



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