



High-rise disaster recovery: Standpipe failure and elevator shutdown

On the eve of Columbus Day weekend, a holiday when many New Yorkers leave the city, a six-inch standpipe on the roof of a high-rise co-op ruptured causing catastrophic damage as water pooled and cascaded through the building. The deluge of water impacted all 32 floors of the building, including 95 apartments and ground floor retail businesses. The damage resulted in a complete shutdown of the water supply and elevator services.

Anything less than an immediate response would result in a mandatory evacuation order, additional damage to sensitive MEP building components, and astronomical repair costs for the board. After a full building assessment, the project management team prepared for the worst and compiled a list of shareholders and residents, with a focus on the building's most sensitive demographics, including children, the elderly, and the mobility impaired.

“Total damage to the physical building, critical infrastructure, and individual units resulted in more than \$2 million in insurance claims.”

– Senior Project Manager,
FirstService Project
Management

Rapid response, expert solutions.

While property managers are expected to wear many hats, certain situations require more specific expertise, especially during an emergency. **FirstService Project Management**, our emergency response and construction management affiliate, immediately assembled a mitigation team to assess flood damage, source necessary tools and materials, and develop a shareholder communication plan with the property managers.

The timing of the emergency was a particular challenge, considering early holiday closure of many businesses that would normally supply plumbing materials to city contractors. Within one hour of the standpipe failure, the Project Management team had elevator engineers, a master plumber, facility inspectors, and an extraction crew to assess and restore basic building services. The main focus was to avoid a mandatory evacuation of hundreds of residents by restoring the building's elevator service and domestic water supply.

Given the size of FirstService Residential's management portfolio, our partner plumbers had access to specialty suppliers across the five boroughs to source all necessary hardware. Once received, the plumbers created new pipe cuttings on-site to replace all failed components.



Many residents were forced to leave their apartments due to extensive water damage. However, some elderly residents and those with limited mobility, who lived on upper floors of the building, were essentially trapped in place without access to a working elevator.

At the base of the building, an extraction team dredged a trio of elevator pits that were filled with several feet of murky water. Once the pits were sufficiently dry, the elevator engineers assessed all damaged components. The project management team helped the engineers scour local elevator component suppliers, working against the clock into the evening hours. There were two elevators that were too severely damaged for resident use and took an additional week to be restored. However, by 11 p.m. that same night, one elevator was repaired and access to upper floor apartments was fully restored.



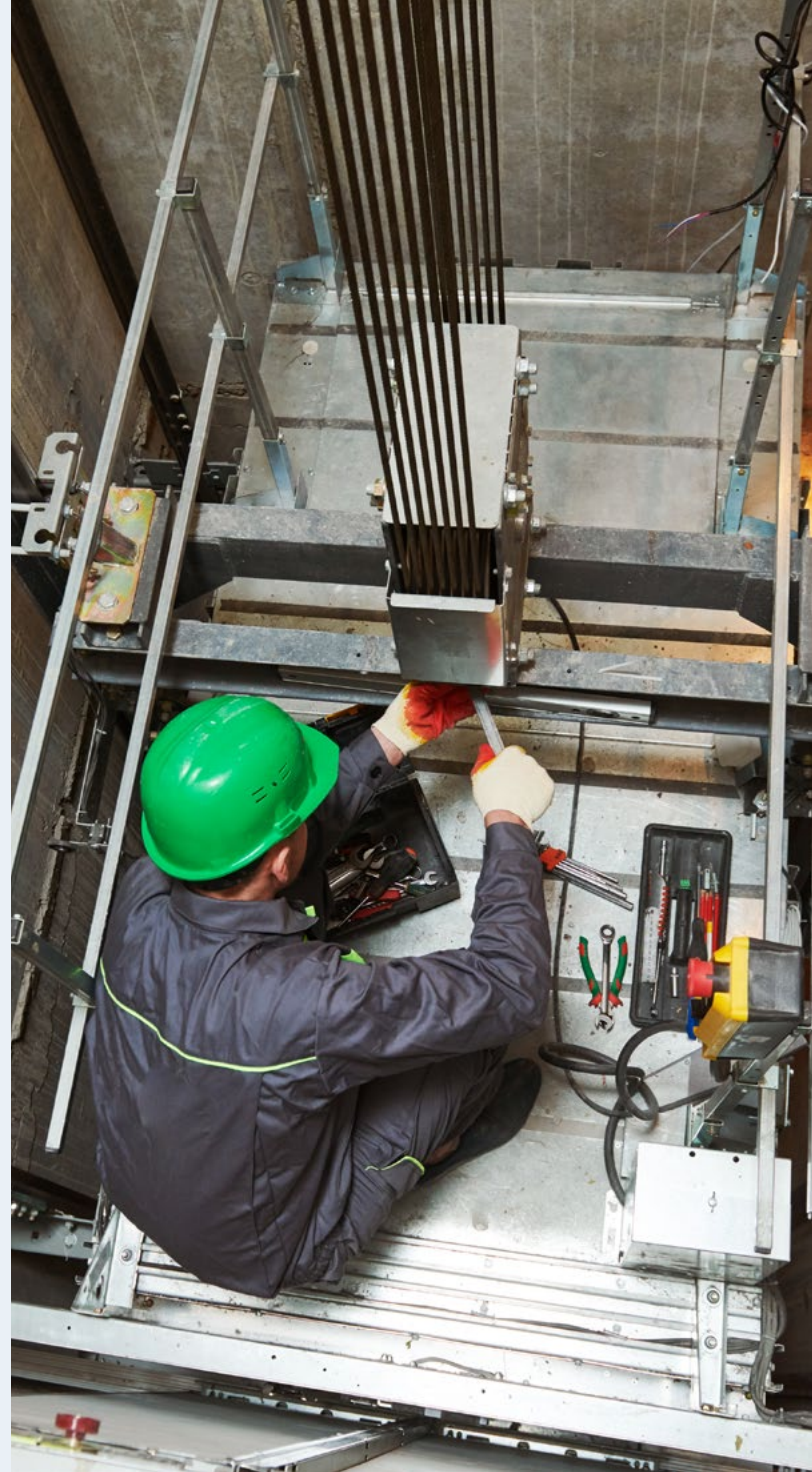
In an emergency, frequent communication with building residents is just as important as swift action.

Our property managers relayed detailed updates to the board, shareholders, and residents using Building Link, a virtual platform that simplifies mass communication. Alerts were delivered via email, text, and pre-recorded voice messages to ensure every resident received the updates. These alerts continued for the next two weeks as repairs and inspections were completed.

Beyond keeping all residents in-the-know, the level and extent of communication gave residents peace of mind and a sense of security that their home, their most valued asset, was in good hands. Without alignment among the board of directors, building management team, project managers, and specialty contractors, restoration of the building's critical facilities in record time would not have been possible.

“It was nothing short of a Miracle on 17th Street!”

-Co-op Board President



Let's talk

Beyond protecting your building, we are also responsible for creating a sense of calm among your residents. With our extensive portfolio and professional relationships across a multitude of sectors, our project managers can negotiate significant savings following a facility failure or catastrophic loss.