

ARE YOUR ARCHIVES SUSCEPTIBLE TO WATER DAMAGE?

Water is a source of life, but it can also be a source of trouble.

There's no need to remind you. A burst pipe or the triggering of a sprinkler system is enough to cause considerable damage to the hard copies of archived files. And since precious documents often end up in the basement, they find themselves directly underneath a number of water pipes. Since water obeys the laws of gravity, it finds its way through several floors to ultimately reach your archives.

When archives are stored in cardboard boxes rather than fixed structures, the damage is even greater. Boxes directly on the ground bathe in accumulated water and can become a soggy mess. As a result, they give way under the weight of other boxes, plunging directly into a soup of water, dust and dirt.

When filing their claim, companies often tell us that the file folders contained in the archive boxes have not been scanned and are only consulted from time to time. The problem is, sorting through all these files to determine which ones are no longer useful would be more costly than treating all the documents that

have become soaked. All files with a high moisture content must be frozen, dehydrated, then filed, a process which is usually expensive.

To minimize the risks, it is recommended not to store archived documents in the basement. Whether they are in the basement or not, archives should be raised at least 15 cm off the ground. In addition, archive boxes should not be stacked on top of one another but rather stored in a rigid structure that is unaffected by water accumulation. A waterproof sheet or tarp should cover and protect all important files. Finally, it is always preferable not to store boxes under water pipes.

We realize that these recommendations, including the one to raise archive boxes off the ground, do not guarantee that your precious files will not be damaged! Water from a triggered sprinkler system can rain down unabated for what can seem like an eternity. Pipe joints can also give way due to the effects of rust on retaining pipe clips. The result: several feet of water can accumulate in record time in the room where the archives are stored.

To discuss your insurance and risk management needs, we encourage you to get in touch with your Vézina portfolio manager. He will be able to analyze your situation and make sound, relevant recommendations.