



**Water influx can damage the electrical systems and structural elements of a building and ruin expensive finishes and furnishings. Residual moisture, if not immediately addressed, may encourage the rapid growth of mould inside walls and subfloors and pose a serious health risk. Recovery after a water-loss can be an overwhelming task for both property managers and residents. In addition to the cost of repairs, there is sometimes the necessity of displacing residents and disturbing their sense of comfort and security.**

In multi-storey Retirement Homes and Independent Living Facilities, severe losses may be caused by something as simple as an unattended running faucet or a leaking bathroom fixture. Without timely detection, minor incidents can quickly escalate into

major problems with water from a single source flowing into adjacent units and common areas.

Fortunately, there are a variety of loss mitigation techniques that can assist in the early detection, and prevention, of losses like these.

There are three distinct approaches which can vary greatly in effectiveness, cost, and practicality: passive leak detection, active leak detection, and structural solutions. Ultimately, property owners and administrators should assess the specific needs of their residents in order to determine an appropriate solution.

## 1. Passive Leak Detection

Passive leak-detection devices, which are similar to standard smoke detectors, are typically the most cost-effective option. They are usually battery operated and are intended to emit an audible warning when their sensors come into contact with water. Placed on floors or at the rim of a sink or bathtub, they can warn residents of a potential

overflow. Because of their cost-effectiveness, ease of installation, and low maintenance requirements, passive devices can be an attractive option for large retirement facilities. However, they are a limited solution since they are only effective when combined with human intervention.

## 2. Active Leak Detection

Active leak-detection devices provide an added layer of security by bypassing the need for a human response. When their sensors are triggered by a leak, these devices will often emit an audible tone, similar to passive devices, while simultaneously triggering an automated shutoff valve connected to the water supply. Many types can also be connected to either a local or monitored alarm system. For this reason, active devices can be used in occupied units but can

also be effective when a unit or building is unoccupied. These systems are characteristically more expensive than their passive counterparts and usually require installation by a certified plumber. They are ideal for seasonally occupied dwellings and in circumstances where unit occupants may not be easily alerted by, or able to respond to the warnings emitted by passive devices.

## 3. Structural Solutions

While there are devices on the market that can be effectively retrofitted, water-loss mitigation features should ideally be contemplated during the design and construction phase of the facility. There are several structural solutions that move beyond detection to make individual units and common areas more resistant to water influx.

- Placing floor drains in kitchen and bathroom areas can help minimize damage and divert the flow of water away from places that are prone to flooding.

- Adequately-sized backflow apertures can carry water away from bathtubs and sinks and motion-activated faucets can prevent overfilling while also conserving water.

Some of these features would be impractical and costly to install once a building has been fully constructed. Nevertheless, facility owners and operators should consider structural water-loss solutions for potential integration during new construction phases and building renovations.

## Conclusion

Although water influx can be devastating, it is often entirely preventable. Facility operators can guard against the damage and displacement caused by a serious water damage loss by undertaking documented regular inspections and by being cognizant of some of the loss control options available. By doing so, care-givers can extend their residents a maximum amount of independence and self determination while ensuring their safety and security.

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