

## From Panic to Prepared: How One University Transformed Its Water Event Response

Water damage is a costly and complex challenge for institutions, especially those managing expansive facilities. and the University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK) was no exception.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
KNOXVILLE

### THE PROBLEM

With 250 aging campus buildings and a range of new building construction defects, **UTK faced annual water losses ranging from \$2 million to \$4 million per year.** Minor clean water incidents, such as winter pipe breaks, accounted for \$200,000 per year – a significant expense for any institution. With 100 water losses per year and insurance deductibles rising to \$50,000 per incident, UTK recognized the urgent need for an internal solution.

#### Challenges:

- Unpredictable water issues with no prevention plan.
- No dedicated response team or training.
- High facilities team turnover.
- Limited equipment not suited for mitigation.

As a result, the university relied heavily on outside contractors –driving up costs, delaying response, and increasing insurance deductibles.



### READY 2 RESPOND® SOLUTION

UTK partnered with the R2R® program to overhaul its water emergency response strategy. **The goal was clear: manage clean water losses under \$50,000 in-house** to reduce reliance on contractors and streamline response efforts.

*“Given the large number of water losses, our insurance deductible went up dramatically, so it made sense to apply those funds to building our in-house capacity for handling clean water losses.”*

—Randy Hamilton, Director of Operations



A comprehensive, **onsite R2R Assessment** identified critical gaps in UTK’s existing water damage readiness while evaluating:

- Facilities team response capabilities, both availability and training.
- Access to professional equipment
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for water events.
- Written emergency water response plan.

Then the R2R team worked with UTK to implement a tailored plan to address the gaps, including:

1. **Training and Team Building** – Empowered current team members to respond quickly and confidently to water events and prepared them to train new hires.
2. **Equipment Readiness** – Stocked a dedicated emergency response trailer with professional-grade extraction tools, dehumidifiers, and airmovers.





## RESULTS

The transformation was a resounding success. UTK's facilities team became proficient in responding to water events and mitigating damage swiftly and efficiently. The outcome was:

- **Team well-trained** and able to train new employees
- **Dedicated equipment trailer available** to serve entire campus.
- **Savings of \$400,000 in contractor fees over first 18 months** more than paid for equipment and hiring two water restoration techs.

*"After purchasing the right equipment and R2R training, we have a choice: If it's clean water, we can handle it in-house, or we can at least start the drying process then turn it over to a contractor - either way, I just wanted to have options."*  
—Randy Hamilton, Director of Operations

### Key Lessons

UTK's experience highlights the value of obtaining an in-depth R2R Assessment to understand current readiness and identify areas for improvement. Facilities managers can draw valuable insights from this case:

- **Invest in Training** – Equip first responder teams with the knowledge and skills to act decisively in a water event's critical minutes.
- **Stock Essential Equipment** – Maintain readily accessible, dedicated tools for water extraction and drying.
- **Develop a Response Plan** – Document procedures and assign roles to ensure clarity during emergencies.

*"With the training we've received from R2R, I feel like my team is always ready. I don't have any fear of being unable to respond. I feel completely confident."*  
—Randy Hamilton, Director of Operations

## ONGOING SUPPORT

UTK continues to partner with the Ready 2 Respond Program to enhance its facilities team's capabilities by participating in:

- **Ready 2 Respond® University: Drying School** that prepares R2R partners to lead first responder teams.
- **Ongoing Consultation** through ready technical assistance and follow-up evaluations.



## BUILDING CONFIDENT TEAMS AND IN-HOUSE SOLUTIONS

**Let's get your team Ready 2 Respond.**

Find out how you can benefit by partnering with the Ready 2 Respond team to transform your water emergency response.

**CONTACT US AT 888-208-5401  
TO LEARN HOW WE CAN HELP**