

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Safety Meeting Packet

Protect Your Workforce



Severe weather can strike at any time. Each year, thousands of injuries and hundreds of deaths occur due to severe weather and natural disasters. The dangers of serious injury or loss of life are greatly reduced with an emergency plan.

An important part of being prepared is knowing what to do during severe weather or a natural disaster.

Develop a disaster plan for the workplace that includes identifying a safe place to take shelter.

Tornadoes

Tornadoes can occur before there is a visible funnel cloud and may not be detectable until debris and dirt get swept into the vortex, and/or the funnel cloud develops all the way to the ground.

Should a tornado occur, seek shelter immediately. The best forms of shelter are a sturdy building or storm shelter designed for tornadoes or wind. Manufactured homes (mobile trailers) offer little protection, even if tied down.

Warnings and Watches

Severe weather alerts are divided into two categories:

- **WATCH** - Severe weather is possible in the current conditions in or near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a warning is issued.
- **WARNING** - Severe weather has been spotted or is radar-indicated. There is imminent danger to life and property. Take shelter immediately.

Before Severe Weather Strikes

Weather radios can be extremely helpful to stay on top of the weather in the area. They can be purchased at most electronic stores and come in a lot of varieties. Some can be programmed to only play warnings for a single county and others include battery backup. Use a weather radio with a warning alarm and battery backup to receive updated warnings. If a weather radio is not available, information on watches and warnings may be obtained from the internet, commercial radio, or television/cable channels.

Be aware of the exact worksite location, as the National Weather Service issues warnings based on counties/parishes or a portion of a county/parish. Monitor the progress of the storm through maps, radar, or the local television news.

When located in a building, move to the lowest level (i.e. cellar, basement) and get under a heavy piece of furniture or sit next to the wall with hands/arms covering the head. If an underground shelter is not available, move to a room or hallway as far into the building as possible. The more walls between the shelter area and the outside of the building, the safer it is. Getting into a bathtub, closet, or under a bed or sofa can also help.

If located in a vehicle, do not try to outrun the tornado. Avoid highway overpasses, as they create a wind-tunnel effect that can increase the speed of the winds and the chance of flying debris (glass, wood, metal). Flying debris is the cause of most tornado-related deaths and injuries.

If caught outside, lie flat on the ground in an area lower than the surrounding ground, covering the head. Be aware of possible flooding in low-lying areas if there is heavy rain.



Hurricanes

When faced with the potential of a hurricane or tropical storm, the most important thing is to be prepared to evacuate. The order to evacuate may come at any time and it is essential to listen to the authorities if an evacuation is ordered.

It is important to have an evacuation plan in place to ensure that workers can get to safety when an evacuation is ordered. The plan should:

- Identify when the plan comes into action
- List who is in charge should an incident occur
- Identify what key emergency functions need completed
- Direct employees to exits and safety routes
- Include procedures to account for all employees, addressing possible issues, and getting help



If there is no order to evacuate, move to the lowest level of the building before the storm hits. If this is not possible, move toward a room, hallway, or closet in the interior of the building. Avoid being near windows, skylights, or glass doors as these areas may increase

the potential of damage or injuries from the hurricane.

Do not get tricked by a period of calm winds. The eye of the hurricane may be passing over the area and the winds will quickly pick back up. Remain in shelter until the authorities signal that the area is clear and it is safe to leave the shelter.

Lightning

If there is possible lightning in the area, remain indoors. Lightning can strike ahead of a storm even at times when it appears to be safe. Utility lines or underground pipes can carry electrical currents into a home or building. Because of this, limit the use of electrical appliances.

Outdoor activities, like a company picnic, should be postponed until the lightning has passed.

Be careful when selecting a shelter. Do not take shelter in a small shed as they may quickly ignite if struck by lightning. Stay away from tall objects such as trees, towers, and poles that may fall if struck by lightning. If there is not a building nearby, take shelter in a vehicle, but avoid touching any metal surfaces.

Lightning striking a shelter may cause one's hair to stand on end. If this occurs, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recommends squatting down into a baseball catcher's position with a finger in each ear. This may help prevent the person's eardrums from exploding due to the current. Never lie flat on the ground.



NOAA also recommends following the 30/30 rule. The 30/30 rule states that if the time between lighting and thunder is under 30 seconds, immediately find shelter. Once sheltered, remain there for 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

Flash Floods

When in a low terrain, move to higher ground when thunderstorms and heavy rains are in the area.

Be extremely careful when driving, as vehicles can hydroplane easily, causing the driver to lose control.



Do not walk or drive onto flooded roads or into flowing water. If the route is blocked, turn around. It only takes a small amount of water to lose control of the vehicle. Major flooding can also hide holes or debris that can damage a vehicle or cause physical injuries or drowning.

Hail

Hail is a weather condition that is often produced during thunderstorms. Hail can grow upwards of 6 inches in diameter. Hail this size can easily damage, injure, or kill.

If a thunderstorm produces hail, seek shelter immediately. Stay as far as possible from windows, skylights, and doors as these can be smashed by large hailstones.

Vehicles are not considered safe shelter due to their number of windows. If possible, exit the vehicle and try to find a building for shelter.



Remain in the shelter until the storm has passed. Do not try to prevent or survey damage during a storm. Exiting the shelter is an unnecessary risk.

Earthquakes

The main danger during an earthquake is injury from falling debris that is dislodged during the earthquake. Earthquakes may also result in injuries from slip and falls to burns and chemical exposure. Many of these hazards may be reduced through planning and preparation. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides recommendations for earthquake planning.



Before an Earthquake

Identify safe areas, such as underneath a table or against walls that are away from windows or equipment that may fall during an earthquake. Ideally these areas will be close to workspaces and easily accessible.

Employees should practice dropping to the floor, holding on to a stable object, and covering their heads. The more these actions are practiced, the more automatic they will become for the employee.

During an Earthquake

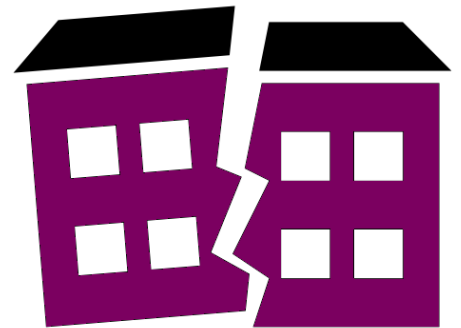
When an earthquake hits, employees should move to the safe area and remain in this location until the shaking stops. If an employee decides to move while the ground is still shaking, even if it is minor, they are still at risk for suffering an injury.

If an employee is unable to make it to their safe area, they should immediately fall to the ground, grab onto something stable, and cover their head. This position can protect an employee from more severe injuries.

After an Earthquake

Once the shaking has stopped, employees should check themselves for injuries. If unhurt, they should start checking and assisting other employees who may have been injured in the earthquake. Contact emergency medical services if there are severe injuries. Otherwise, monitor the local news to stay caught up on the status of the earthquake. Always be prepared for an aftershock.

If it is necessary to leave a building after an earthquake, exit the building using the stairs only. After an earthquake, there is no way to tell if an elevator is functioning properly. Employees should also be on the lookout for falling debris, fires, or other potential hazards.



Once outside, move away from any buildings, towers, or trees. They may be unstable and fall if an aftershock occurs.

For OSHA information regarding severe weather safety, please consult the following:

- 29 CFR 1926.35: Occupational Health and Environmental Controls
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Severe Weather and Natural Disasters Safety Meeting Attendance Acknowledgement

Company Name _____
 Department / Division _____
 Meeting Date & Time _____ AM PM
 Meeting Location _____
 Name & Title of Individual Conducting Meeting _____

Key Meeting Discussion Points / Important Reminders:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Internal Procedures Reviewed:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

By signing this document, you confirm your attendance at the meeting and acknowledge the issues addressed above!

Employees in Attendance		
(Print): _____	(Print): _____	(Print): _____
(Sign): _____	(Sign): _____	(Sign): _____
(Print): _____	(Print): _____	(Print): _____
(Sign): _____	(Sign): _____	(Sign): _____
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(Print): _____	(Print): _____	(Print): _____
(Sign): _____	(Sign): _____	(Sign): _____

Employees not present: _____

Suggestions/Recommendations to improve workplace safety and health: _____

Actions Taken: _____

Manager/Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Disclaimer:

The information provided above was assembled using multiple resources. However, these materials do not contain ALL the information available regarding the required safety standards under local, provincial, state, or federal law for your industry.
