

**TOOLBOX TALK**

# Severe Weather Preparedness

**WHY THIS MATTERS**

Lightning strikes 20-25 million times per year in the U.S., injuring over 300 workers and killing about 50 (NOAA/OSHA). Construction workers account for over 20% of lightning fatalities. Wind, rain, ice, and heat kill hundreds more. Preparedness saves lives.

**300+**

Workers struck by lightning yearly (OSHA)

**30/30**

Rule: shelter at 30 sec flash-to-bang; wait 30 min

**10 mi**

Lightning can strike from this distance (NOAA)

## 5 Rules for Severe Weather Preparedness

Every outdoor worker must follow these rules to stay safe in severe weather:

**1****MONITOR WEATHER DAILY**

Check NOAA forecasts before each shift. Designate a competent person to monitor changing conditions throughout the day. Never ignore darkening skies or rising winds.

**2****WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS**

If you hear thunder — even distant rumble — seek shelter immediately in a fully enclosed building. Thunder means lightning is close enough to strike you.

**3****KNOW YOUR SHELTER LOCATIONS**

Before work begins, identify safe shelters at every work area. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are safest. Vehicles with hard tops are second choice.

**4****FOLLOW THE 30/30 RULE**

Seek shelter when the flash-to-bang time is 30 seconds or less (lightning is 6 miles away). Wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder before resuming outdoor work.

**5****STOP WORK IN HIGH WINDS**

OSHA prohibits scaffold work during storms and high winds. Cranes must cease operation per manufacturer wind limits. Secure loose materials before storms arrive.

## Before You Start — Quick Checklist

- Has today's weather forecast been checked (NOAA)?
- Is a competent person designated to monitor weather?
- Are safe shelter locations identified for all work areas?
- Do all workers know the severe weather action plan?
- Are loose materials and equipment secured against wind?
- Is a weather radio or alert app available on site?

## Weather Hazards — Know Your Threat Level

**Lightning:** Seek enclosed shelter immediately. Avoid tall objects, metal, water, and open areas. Do not shelter under trees.

**High wind:** Stop crane operations, scaffold work, and aerial lift use. Secure loose materials. Evacuate temporary structures.

**Tornado:** Move to interior rooms on lowest floors. Avoid windows. If outdoors, lie flat in a ditch — do not stay in vehicles.

**Flash flood:** Move to high ground immediately. Never walk or drive through flood water — 6 inches can knock you down.

**Extreme heat:** Provide water, rest, and shade. Follow OSHA heat illness prevention guidelines. Watch for heat stroke signs.

**Ice/Snow:** Clear walkways and access routes. Use sand or salt. Watch for black ice. Adjust work schedules to avoid exposure.

### Common Mistakes That Kill in Severe Weather

- ✗ Waiting too long to seek shelter — most lightning victims are struck at the beginning or end of a storm
- ✗ Sheltering under a tree — trees attract lightning and are one of the most dangerous places to be
- ✗ Resuming work too soon after a storm — lightning can strike up to 30 minutes after the last thunder
- ✗ Ignoring wind speed limits — unsecured materials become projectiles and lifts can tip over
- ✗ Not having a severe weather plan — scrambling during a storm leads to panic and injuries

### Safety Tips to Remember

- ✓ Lightning victims are safe to touch — they carry no charge. Begin CPR immediately if needed
- ✓ If caught outside: crouch low, feet together, head down — never lie flat on the ground
- ✓ Keep a NOAA Weather Radio on site — it provides real-time severe weather alerts 24/7
- ✓ Designate a weather watcher on every shift — one person monitoring means everyone is safer
- ✓ Wind chill and heat index are the real dangers — dress for what it feels like, not what it reads

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. Where are the nearest safe shelters at our current work area?
2. Do we have a severe weather action plan and has everyone reviewed it?
3. Who is our designated weather watcher today?
4. What would we do if a tornado warning was issued right now?
5. How quickly can we shut down operations and reach shelter?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance sheet attached: [ ] Yes