



Worker Safety

Severe Weather Safety at Work

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires all employers to develop a written emergency action plan to protect employees during emergency situations, including severe weather.

Emergency Action Plan

An emergency action plan (EAP) is a written document required by OSHA standards [**29 CFR 1910.38(a)**]. The purpose of an EAP is to facilitate and organize employer and employee actions during workplace emergencies. Well-developed emergency plans and proper employee training (such that employees understand their roles and responsibilities within the plan) will result in fewer and less severe employee injuries and less structural damage to the facility during emergencies. A poorly prepared plan likely will lead to a disorganized evacuation or emergency response, resulting in confusion, injury, and property damage.

Minimum Requirements

Putting together a comprehensive emergency action plan that deals with those issues specific to your worksite is not difficult. It involves taking what was learned from your workplace evaluation and describing how employees will respond to different types of emergencies, taking into account your specific worksite layout, structural features, and emergency system.

Evacuation Plan Elements

A disorganized evacuation can result in confusion, injury, and property damage. ***Follow these tips to better your plan.***

Develop & Implement the Plan

Drafting an ***emergency action plan (EAP)*** is not enough to ensure the safety of your employees. When

an evacuation is necessary, you will need responsible, trained individuals who can supervise and coordinate activities to ensure a safe and successful evacuation. An EAP will be useful only if its content is up to date and employees are sufficiently educated and trained before an actual evacuation.

Know the difference between a Thunderstorm Watch and a Thunderstorm Warning.

- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch:** Severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a severe thunderstorm warning is issued.
- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning:** Severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property.

Here's what to do when a severe thunderstorm occurs while you are at work:

- Stay inside, and stay away from windows and any glass doors, skylights, etc.
- Avoid talking on the phone, if you can hear thunder and take off headsets.
- You can be injured by lightning inside the office. Stay away from all electronics, appliances, and metal items like doors and window frames.

Know the difference between a Tornado Watch and Warning:

- If a **Tornado Watch** is issued for your area, it means that a tornado is "possible."
- If a **Tornado Warning** is issued, it means that a tornado has been spotted, or rotation has been indicated on radar, and it is time to go to a safe shelter immediately.

What to do if a tornado occurs when you're at work:

- Understand and recognize what the tornado siren sounds like – if the community where your workplace is located has one.
- ***Make sure tornado safe shelter areas and evacuation routes are properly identified.***
- In extreme situations, sit under a desk.
- A basement at your workplace is unlikely, so go to the lowest floor possible
- If you are outside, get inside.

Using these tips will help everyone stay safe during the spring and summer months when storms are still very prevalent.

For more information visit [*OSHA's Evacuation Plan and Procedures page*](#).

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