



KENTUCKY
AGC Self Insurers' Fund

Severe Weather and Lightning Response Plan

Construction work often takes place in open areas where employees are exposed to rapidly changing weather conditions. Thunderstorms, lightning, high winds, heavy rain, and tornadoes can develop quickly and create life threatening hazards. Every jobsite should have a clear severe weather response plan that all employees understand before an emergency occurs.

Monitor Weather Conditions

Assign a competent person to monitor weather forecasts and conditions throughout the workday. Use reliable weather sources, weather apps, local alerts, and NOAA weather radios when available. Watch for thunderstorms and lightning, high wind warnings, tornado watches and warnings, heavy rain and flash flooding, and hail and damaging wind gusts. Do not rely solely on visible conditions. Lightning can strike miles away from a storm.

When to Stop Work

Immediately stop outdoor work and begin shelter procedures when (a) thunder is heard, even if lightning is not visible, (b) lightning is observed in the area, (c) a weather warning is issued that affects the jobsite, (d) high winds create risks from falling materials, equipment, scaffolds, ladders, cranes, or trees, or (e) heavy rain reduces visibility or creates slip, trip, fall, or excavation hazards.

Remember this rule: ***If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning.***

Lightning Safety

At the first sound of thunder, (1) stop outdoor activities, (2) secure tools, equipment, and materials if it can be done safely, (3) move immediately to an approved shelter, and (4) remain in shelter until at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard. Workers should never remain on roofs, scaffolds, ladders, aerial lifts, cranes, steel structures, or other elevated locations during a thunderstorm.

Approved Shelters

The safest shelters include fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing, substantial permanent structures such as offices, schools, or commercial buildings, and/or fully enclosed metal topped vehicles with windows closed.

Avoid sheltering in open sided structures, equipment cabs that are not fully enclosed, tents or temporary canopies, under trees, near metal fences, scaffolds, or stored materials, and portable toilets.

Tornado and High Wind Response

When a tornado warning is issued or a tornado is observed, stop work immediately, move to the lowest level of a substantial building, stay away from windows and exterior walls, and take shelter in an interior room, hallway, or designated storm shelter. If no building is available, follow the site's emergency action plan and move to the safest designated shelter location.

High winds can cause materials, tools, and debris to become airborne. Suspend crane operations, roof work, scaffold work, and other elevated activities when conditions become unsafe.

Before the Storm Arrives

Every jobsite should identify (1) weather monitoring responsibilities, (2) shelter locations, (3) communication methods, (4) Evacuation routes, and (5) procedures for accounting for all personnel. Review the plan during orientations and safety meetings so every worker knows exactly what to do when severe weather threatens.

Key Takeaway

Severe weather can develop with little warning. The safest response is simple: **When thunder is heard or dangerous weather approaches, stop work, move to a safe shelter, and remain there until conditions are safe. A few minutes of caution can prevent serious injuries or fatalities.**