CrewSigned

Severe Weather Toolbox Talk

5-minute read-aloud · Last reviewed November 24, 2026

Storms can move in fast, and when we are working outside, on steel, on roofs or with tall equipment, we are exposed. Today we will talk about lightning, tornadoes and high wind, and the plan for each one.

Lightning first. It can strike as far as ten miles away from the rain, so if you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be hit. When thunder roars, go indoors. Stop work and get to a safe shelter right away. A safe shelter is a fully enclosed building with plumbing and wiring, or a hard-topped vehicle with the windows up. Open sheds, tents, porta-johns, trees and the cab of open equipment are not safe. Stay off and away from steel, scaffolds, ladders, cranes, fences and water. Wait at least thirty minutes after the last thunder before going back to work, even if the sun comes out.

Somebody needs to watch the weather each day, and we need a way to get the word out to everyone quickly. Check the forecast in the morning and use a weather app with alerts.

Tornadoes come next. A tornado watch means conditions are right for one. A tornado warning means one has been spotted or seen on radar, and you need to move now. Go to the lowest floor of a sturdy building, in an interior room or hallway away from windows and doors. Get down and cover your head and neck. Job trailers, vehicles and porta-johns offer almost no protection. If you are caught in the open with no shelter, lie flat in a low spot away from trees and vehicles and cover your head.

High winds can turn loose material into flying debris and can tip over scaffolds, lifts and cranes. When a storm is coming, secure or bring down loose sheets, plywood, tarps and trash. Follow the wind limits for cranes, aerial lifts and scaffolds, and stop work at heights when the wind picks up.

After the storm, watch for downed power lines, damaged structures, flooded trenches and hanging debris. Treat every downed line as live. Look over the site before anyone goes back to work.

We will practice getting to shelter so everyone knows where to go without thinking about it.

Discussion questions

1. Where is the closest safe shelter from this spot, and how long does it take to get there?
2. Who is watching the weather today, and how will the crew get the word to stop?
3. What loose material on this site could blow around in a strong wind?

OSHA standard

OSHA Emergency Preparedness and Response guidance
https://www.osha.gov/emergency-preparedness

SOURCES

Lightning Safety When Working Outdoors (OSHA 3863): https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3863.pdf
OSHA Tornado Preparedness and Response: https://www.osha.gov/tornado

This talk does not replace training that an OSHA standard requires. Scripts are based on OSHA and NIOSH publications and rewritten in plain language.

Safety Meeting Sign-In Sheet

TOPIC
Severe Weather Toolbox Talk

COMPANY

JOB / SITE

DATE

TIME

PRESENTER

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