



# Tornado Safety

## *How to Protect Your Employees Before and After Storms*

Tornadoes can occur with little or no warning. To help employees stay safe if a tornado occurs in your area, take precautions in advance and provide information about hazards in a tornado's aftermath.

Understand the differences in the tornado warning system:

- **Tornado Watch** - Tornadoes are likely to occur in the watch area. Be ready to act quickly and take shelter, and check supply kits. Monitor radio and television stations for more information.
- **Tornado Warning** - Imminent threat. A tornado has been sighted in the area or has been indicated by radar. Take shelter immediately. Your local emergency management office can provide further information.

To prepare for a tornado, **develop an emergency plan** with details on suitable places to take shelter, policies to account for all employees, and procedures for addressing on-site hazardous materials. Practice this plan and review it annually.

The following are recommended steps to help ensure the safety of employees if a tornado occurs:

- Develop a system for knowing who is in your building(s) in the event of an emergency
- Establish an alarm system to warn employees
  - Test systems frequently
  - Develop plans to communicate warnings to employees with disabilities and/or who do not speak English
- Account for employees, visitors, and customers as they arrive in the shelter
  - Use a prepared roster or checklist
  - Take a head count
- Assign specific duties to employees in advance and create checklists for each specific responsibility. Designate and train employees/alternates if the assigned person is not there and/or is injured.



### Identifying Shelter Locations

An underground area, such as a basement or storm cellar, provides the best protection from a tornado. If an underground shelter is unavailable, consider the following:

- Seek a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible
- Stay away from doors, windows, and outside walls
- Stay in the center of the room, and avoid corners because they attract debris
- Seek rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or block with no windows and a heavy concrete floor or roof system overhead
- **Avoid** auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasiums that have flat, wide-span roofs



Employees should know what to do if outdoors when a tornado threatens. Seek shelter in a basement or a sturdy building. If one is not within walking distance, try to drive in a vehicle, using a seat belt, to the nearest shelter. If flying debris is encountered while in a vehicle, there are two options:

- Stay in the vehicle with the seat belt on, keeping your head below the windows and covering it with your hands or a blanket
- If there is an area which is noticeably lower than the roadway, lie in that area and cover your head with your hands

Post-tornado, take steps to recover. Your employees may face significant hazards, including the potential for additional storms, downed electric lines, and sharp debris. Employees should also be aware of hazards from heat stress and equipment used during response/recovery operations, such as portable generators, and take special precautions to address them.

**Next Steps**  
Education and training are key.  
Consider the following to keep your employees safe:

**Tornado Preparedness and Response—  
Preparedness | Occupational Safety and  
Health Administration**

**Tornado Safety**

**Tornadoes | CDC**

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact your local PMA Risk Control Consultant or reach out to us at [heretohelp@pmagroup.com](mailto:heretohelp@pmagroup.com).

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