



Severe Weather Safety

While spring and summer are traditionally viewed as peak seasons for severe weather, increasingly severe storms can develop at anytime of the year. Whether it's a thunderstorm that brings tornadoes and lightning, or tropical storms and hurricanes that include heavy rainfall and destructive winds, staying safe in a storm means preparing your organization and your employees for them before they happen.

Recognizing the devastating consequences of severe storms

With the incredible forces they wield, storms are capable of impacting thousands of lives in just minutes. Being aware of the kind of destruction that can happen is important as you prepare for the possibility of severe weather in your area.

Think about the effects of Hurricane Katrina, the Indonesian tsunami of 2004, the countless tornadoes that sweep across all parts of the U.S. causing mass amounts of damage and even severe thunderstorms that bring destructive wind and rain. Severe weather isn't something to be taken lightly, because if it is, there's a large possibility for property damage, power outages, business interruptions and even loss of life.

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1-800-258-2667

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Getting prepared

Every company should have a written disaster program in place that outlines the procedures for monitoring and responding to changes in weather conditions, as well as the process of communicating severe weather advisories and alerts to employees. The program should have important information outlined, including:

- The types of alert systems used
- Evacuation procedures
- Designated shelter locations
- Employee responsibilities
- Disaster recovery procedures
- Communication and notification systems
- Facility closing procedures and call-in phone numbers
- Information technology systems used

Within the written program, management needs to designate responsibility for monitoring weather to a specific individual, department or team, who should be thoroughly trained on the company's program.

Some resources for preparedness planning for your business include Ready.gov, Agility Recovery and the National Weather Service.

Staying alert

One of the most important aspects of storm safety is the way an organization stays alert to changing weather conditions. Some of the most common sources of severe weather notification include:

- Live television and radio
- Weather radios
- Computer desktop websites and widgets
- Smartphone applications

These new technologies have increased our ability to stay alert to changing weather conditions. Some applications even provide automated text messages and emails, which can be particularly useful ways to receive timely severe weather alerts and forecasts.

We encourage you to research and take advantage of these evolving technologies as an additional way to stay informed and keep employees safe from severe weather in your area. Management should work together with their Information Technology (IT) department to review available options and how they could be safely integrated into your company's technology systems.

Technological resources

Smartphone apps:

- NOAA Weather Radar
- Weather.com
- Weatherbug.com

Desktop alerts:

- Weather.com
- Weatherbug.com
- AccuWeather.com

Weather alert resources:

- Weather Channel Severe Weather Alerts
- National Weather Service
- Weather.gov

The bottom line is that you, your employees and your organization must be protected from the dangers severe storms can bring. By being aware of changing weather conditions, using technology to respond quickly and having strong disaster plans in place, you are well on your way to keeping you and your employees safer.

For assistance or more information on creating a plan for your organization, contact your United Heartland Loss Control representative today.

