Safety Matters

Staying Safe While Working in Extreme Precipitation



Weather events with extreme precipitation, including hurricanes, thunderstorms and blizzards, can create dangerous working conditions, which can lead to injuries for employees who work outdoors. Employees like you should take action to remain safe when these situations arise.

To prepare for extreme precipitation, you should follow and understand weather alerts from the National Weather Service:

- A **watch** indicates that the risk of a hazardous weather event or a precipitation event has increased significantly, but its occurrence, location and timing are still uncertain.
- A **warning** indicates that a hazardous weather event or a precipitation event is occurring, imminent or likely, and that the weather conditions pose a threat to life or property.
- An **advisory**, like a warning, indicates that a hazardous weather event or precipitation event is occurring. However, advisories are issued for less severe conditions than warnings. You should know that those conditions could still cause significant inconveniences, and if caution is not exercised, they can lead to circumstances that threaten life or property.

It is best to avoid working outdoors when extreme precipitation events are happening because hail, lightning, rain, ice and strong winds can all be dangerous and using equipment during bad weather can cause injuries. You should only work outside during extreme precipitation events if you have been trained to work in such conditions safely, and you should follow your employer's safety plan. If you do work outside during extreme precipitation, the following are safety considerations to take into account:

- Wear waterproof and high-visibility clothing that is appropriate for the temperature.
- Utilize appropriate personal protective equipment, including slip-proof gloves, antifog goggles, and waterproof and slip-resistant footwear (e.g., ice cleats, if needed). Ensure your vision is not obstructed by your gear and that you have a full range of motion.
- Know the signs and symptoms of cold stress, hypothermia and trench foot and how to seek immediate assistance if they occur.
- Take your time and walk slowly and intentionally to prevent slips, trips and falls.
- Utilize the buddy system and communicate with your supervisor.
- Follow site-specific emergency response procedures and know the evacuation protocols, storm shelter locations and what to do if a power outage occurs.
- Only use tools and equipment free of defects and rated for outdoor applications and wet weather. Choose tools with textured, nonslip handles, and ensure the ground can withstand the equipment without it rolling, slipping or sinking into the soil.
- Change your shoes and clothes if they become wet and take breaks in warm, dry areas.
- Use proper lighting or headlamps to improve visibility.
- Stay away from trees or structures that could snap, break or tip over during high winds.

Following these tips can help keep you safe during extreme participation events. Contact your supervisor for more information.

Provided by: ToughComp a division of FFB/Trucordia a top 20 Broker

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