



Minnesota Counties Intergovernmental Trust

A MINI TRAINING SESSION FOR INJURY PREVENTION

Quick Take on Safety

Severe Weather

TRAINING OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

- Overview: This covers basics of how to protect oneself from severe weather including tornadoes, lightning, hail and high winds, both while working indoors and outdoors.
- Purpose: The goal is to inform people of the best practices to avoid injury during severe weather.
- Preparation:
- Read and become familiar with this Quick Take. *Change as needed to reflect procedures and personnel in your organization or department.*
 - Review emergency action plans for your organization and areas of refuge within your facility and acceptable weather radios, phone alerts or other warning systems.
- Handouts: Quick Review of Safety—Severe Weather
- Notes: This presentation cannot cover the emergency sheltering plans of the organization nor the areas of refuge. It is highly recommended that the instructor review the plans and areas of refuge unique to your facility or organization and include them in this presentation. Also consider looking into available automated public alert and warning system applications that can alert employees to approaching severe weather or other hazards.

Severe Weather and Hazards

When people think about severe weather in Minnesota, tornadoes are often the first that come to mind. Lightning, hail and damaging winds are also examples of severe weather common to the state. All severe weather can be dangerous or damaging with some single events causing billion-dollar losses and multiple deaths.

Luckily, we can minimize the threats of severe weather with some planning and following best safety practices. Your health and safety are important to us; we don't want you to get hurt.

Watches and Warnings

Watches and warnings often accompany tornadoes and other severe weather. A watch means that conditions are favorable for severe weather to form. A warning means that severe weather has occurred nearby. A third warning may also include a tornado emergency. This is used only for the most powerful tornadoes approaching heavily populated areas.

Prevention

Prevention efforts are different depending on the specific weather conditions, but all involve taking steps to be aware of the weather and situation. Situational awareness begins when you focus your attention on the weather forecast. Take note of any watches and consider what you would do in case of an emergency.

Also, when under a watch, continue to be aware of changing weather conditions. [*Instructor Prompt:* Discuss usage of weather radios or allowable phone applications or weather alerts specific to your employees. Remind them to have them available and in working order when under a severe weather watch or warning.]

In any warning situation, seek shelter immediately. Remember the following best practices if you encounter severe weather events when you are either indoors or outside.

Indoors

Tornadoes

- Proceed to the designated safety area. [*Instructor Prompt:* Tell people where the designated areas are or ask them where the areas are and elicit responses to ensure participant understanding.]
- If a designated area is not defined, the safest area within a building is underground or on the lowest level in an interior room away from windows. Large warehouses or buildings with wide-open areas are significantly less safe than other types of structures. Avoid seeking shelter in pre-fabricated homes.
- Lay flat on the ground with your hands behind your head.

Lightning

- If you hear thunder, it is best to stay indoors and avoid using corded electrical equipment or leaning against metal support structures for a facility.

High Winds, Hail

- Take shelter inside, in a sturdy building away from windows.
- Avoid putting yourself at risk by going outside to protect property from hail.

Outside

Tornadoes

- It is not safe to be outside during a tornado. If possible, move to a sturdy structure and into an interior room either below ground or on the lowest level away from windows.
- If trapped outdoors away from buildings, make a quick assessment to ensure you are not sheltering under power lines or other hazardous conditions. Then find the lowest lying area nearby and lay flat facedown with your hands over your head. You may also take shelter in your car and hide below the steering wheel. Neither of these situations is ideal and should only be used as a last resort.
- Avoid sheltering under overpasses or bridges. These places put people at greater risk for injuries.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in a car; traffic jams or downed trees or power lines can stop a car and leave no other methods of escape.

Lightning

- If outdoors, move to interior shelter as quickly as possible.
- Steel-shelled vehicles can offer protection but avoid making contact with the steel frame. Fiberglass, plastic or cloth tops do not offer protection against lightning.
- Avoid taking shelter under trees or other tall objects.

High Winds, Hail

- When possible move inside to a room away from windows. Use an object to protect your head from hail until you get indoors.
- If it is not possible to seek shelter indoors, find a car or other object to offer some overhead protection.
- Trees or other objects can blow over in strong winds. Fixed sturdy structures or objects are the best protection.

- When driving, depending on the severity of the storm, pull over safely and wait for the storm to pass. Be wary of nearby trees, telephone poles or other items that may fall.

Discussion Questions

- How can we prevent injuries due to severe weather?
- Are there other ways we can better inform ourselves of changing weather conditions?

Severe Weather Session Planning and Review

Trainer

Training
Date

Department(s)

TRAINING GOALS

- Employees will be aware of the best practices involved to protect themselves from severe weather in a variety of locations.
- Employees will understand the differences between a watch and warning.
- Employees will know better tools to maintain awareness of changing weather conditions.

RESOURCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Natural Disasters and Severe Weather: Tornadoes,” and “Lightning,” [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- Department of Homeland Security, “Tornadoes,” “Thunderstorms and Lightning,” and “Severe Weather,” [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov)

REVIEW

Did the training meet the stated goals?

How can the training be improved?

TRAINER COMMENTS

