

March 11, 2011

There's No Place Like Home--Especially in a Weather Emergency!

Emergency preparedness is critical in the workplace and may be one of the first things you cover when training new employees. But it's also a good idea to give workers practical safety information for home weather emergencies, too. Being prepared for weather emergencies can make a big difference in the impact such an event makes on workers, their families, and their property.

Begin with a refresher on your company's procedures in weather emergencies. Make sure workers know:

- *How they can find out if the company will be closed*
- *How they are to notify the company if they are unable to get to work*
- *Their status—or not—as an essential worker who must remain on duty during a weather emergency*

Why It Matters...

- According to the National Weather Service, in one recent year, there were 366 fatalities caused by weather events.
- There were 1,827 injuries.
- Property damage costs were more than \$6.6 million.

Just as you have a written emergency plan in the workplace, advise workers to create such a plan for their household. A personal emergency plan should consider several common problems workers may face in any type of weather emergency. For example, workers should:

- *Prepare to lose electricity—that is very likely to happen in many emergencies, and the loss may last for hours or even for days.*
- *That means there will be no refrigeration and probably no ability to cook, so have emergency food that doesn't require heating plus adequate drinking water for a few days.*
- *Have a portable radio and emergency lighting charged and ready.*

Advise workers to pay attention to weather reports of impending emergencies. In case of a possible hurricane, blizzard, or flood, they will usually have sufficient time to prepare their home for the coming storm. They know best what type of damage is most likely, depending on the predictions they hear about an impending storm, and they should do whatever is necessary to protect it before the storm hits.

Even with the best preparation, some emergencies may still require evacuation. Advise workers to take the following steps to prepare:

- *Make sure the car has plenty of fuel.*
- *Evacuate if you are ordered to do so—lives are more important than property.*
- *Have an emergency supply kit in the car at all times.*

- *Be aware of roads in the area that are most likely to be unusable in case of flooding or heavy snow, and try to find safer routes.*
- *Never try to cross flooded roadways.*
- *Prepare an advance list of important things to take with you:*
 - *Sufficient indoor and outdoor clothing for a few days; and/or*
 - *Prescription medicines and important papers, such as insurance policies.*

Finally, recommend that workers discuss their emergency planning with their families. They may get separated, so everyone needs to know what to do—and how to communicate with other family members.

- *Keep cell phones ready for communicating with family members who get separated.*
- *Make sure everyone has access to emergency phone numbers.*
- *Arrange for a designated location to meet if you can't return to your home.*

Reassure your workers that most weather emergencies are not life threatening if the workers are adequately prepared. Having a plan in place before it becomes necessary offers the best protection.

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