



Tornado Safety: Before, During, and After the Storm

The Next Three Seconds Protects Your Life, Your Loved Ones, Your Livelihood®

The N3L3 philosophy:

our approach to protecting workers from fatal and life-changing events.

Eastern Alliance is here to help. To learn more about Eastern's N3L3 program and access other safety resources, sign in and visit the Safety Tools on www.easternalliance.com, or contact your Risk Management Consultant for assistance

1.855.533.3444

According to the NOAA Severe Storms Laboratory, the United States experiences about 1,200 tornados each year. Peak tornado season is recognized as March to June, however, tornados can and have happened any time of year. Similarly, these storms can occur any time of day or night. The Midwest and the South see the greatest risk for tornados but these violent storms can occur anywhere when the right conditions are present. Meteorologists are tasked with tracking weather systems to identify the presence of conditions that could warrant a tornado and warn the affected people. Unfortunately, despite advances in technology and monitoring, sometimes there is minimal time to warn of an approaching tornado. The severe threat and limited warning tornados present emphasize the importance of ensuring your business is prepared for a storm that could come your way.

Before the Storm:

- **Stay Informed:** Know your area's tornado risk and warning systems. Some communities have Emergency Notification Systems that can be sent out via text messages or email. Many smart phones have alerts that will sound if these are turned on. Remember to consider the risk of all areas you have employees working.
- **Have a plan in place:** The Company should have a detailed emergency action plan that identifies all potential emergencies and the associated procedures. Ensure the plan specifically identifies the alarm signal and shelter locations for tornados. It is important that employees know the steps they need to take in the event of an emergency. Employers should practice emergency drills to evaluate the effectiveness of training and existing plans.
- **Select and identify shelters:** The best place to shelter is an underground area such as a basement or cellar. If these options aren't available seek out a location that is an interior room or hall, on the lowest floor possible, away from doors, windows, and outside walls, and rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or blocks.
- **Establish Accountability-** Have a process in place to identify who is present on the worksite so they can be quickly identified and accounted for during an emergency situation. Duties and responsibilities of the emergency action plan should be assigned and clearly communicated.
- **Monitor the Weather-** the Company should have and monitor a weather radio. The person assigned to monitoring the weather should communicate any developments with management.
- **Keep Information Updated-** The emergency action plan and important information such as contact information should be updated at least annually.
- **Stock Up on Emergency Supplies:** Keep an emergency kit ready to go with supplies. Visit <https://www.ready.gov/kit> for information on what to put in your kit.



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During the Storm:

- Recognize the Warning Signs- Look out for dark green skies and often there will be large hail. You may notice a dark, rotating, and low cloud. A loud roar like a freight train will usually be heard.
- It is important to understand the difference between a Tornado Warning and a Tornado Watch and take appropriate action. The National Weather Service advises the following:
 - Tornado Watch- Be prepared! Tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. Review and discuss your emergency plans and check supplies and your safe room. Be ready to act quickly if a warning is issued or you suspect a tornado is approaching.
 - Tornado Warning- Take Action! A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. There is imminent danger to life and property. Move to an interior room on the lowest floor of a sturdy building.
- Sound the alarm and seek shelter! Have employees assemble in identified shelter locations. Continue to monitor the weather radio for updates.
- Being in a vehicle during a tornado is not safe. Whenever possible, discourage employees from traveling during a tornado watch. If an employee is on the road during a tornado watch encourage them to get off the road and find a safe location they can shelter should a storm present. If on the road when a tornado strikes, employees should get down in the car or abandon the vehicle to seek shelter in a low lying area such as a ditch. Do not try to "outrun" the storm by driving away. Do not seek shelter under highway overpasses.
- When employees are working outside consider that additional time may be needed to get to safe shelter.
- While sheltering, encourage employees to protect their head and necks. If hard hats or helmets are available - wear them.
- Stay sheltered until after the storm has ended, weather radio has indicated the all clear, or emergency personnel arrive.

After the Storm:

- It may appear the danger has ceased, but it is important to recognize that many hazards linger after the storm.
- Check in with employees to see if anyone is injured. Seek medical care for these employees and if work-related promptly report to Eastern Alliance.
- Recognize that the recovery and response work is non-routine and likely outside your scope of operations. Don't take a fatal and life-changing risk; instead use qualified, insured contractors.



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- Be aware of downed power lines, frayed wires, leaking gas pipes, and other hazardous damaged items.
- Use caution when driving, as hazardous driving conditions are common following tornadoes.
- Before starting any response or recovery activities, pre-plan the work. This will encourage you to carefully evaluate the hazards presented and extend controls to protect employees.
- Educate and provide training for employees on the restoration and clean-up work you will be completing. Since some of this work will be new or out of the ordinary, training is crucial to ensure safe work practices are followed. If you hire any additional employees to support your efforts please ensure they are given adequate new employee orientation that covers required safety practices.
- Inspect the work area for any debris that could cause a slip, trip or fall. Ensure employees check their work areas and eliminate these hazards.
- Nails, sharp debris, and other materials could cause lacerations or punctures. Inspect work areas for any of these exposures. Visibly inspect material before handling them to identify safe spots to grab. Use PPE such as gloves, safety glasses, sleeves, boot, and long pants. Where possible use lifting equipment to eliminate manual material handling.
- Be mindful of air quality concerns following the storm. Debris or contaminants from damaged structures could be present. Dust masks or respirators may be required.
- Many contractors rely on generators every day to provide power. During storm clean up generators take on an even greater role in providing much needed power in areas with power outages. It is important that safe procedures be followed while using generators to control carbon monoxide and electrocution exposures.
- Demolition is best left to qualified professions as it involves many potential hazards that are not regularly encountered during normal business operations.
- Ensure all individuals have been properly trained on how to safely operate generators, chainsaws, or other power tools. Do not assume they know how to operate this equipment without proper training.



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There are numerous hazards to consider before, during, and after a tornado. In addition to the helpful tips above we also encourage you to visit:

- Tornado Response Safety- <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/tornado.html>
- Natural Disasters and Severe Weather- <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/index.html>
- Disaster Cleanup and Recovery PPE Matrix- <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3898.pdf>
- Tornado Preparedness and Response- <https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/tornado/index.html>
- Ready.gov Information on Tornadoes- <https://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>
- Prepare Your Organization for a Tornado Playbook- https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1409936139924-14f8f593c82cf0ee0384701252b30995/prepareathon_playbook_tornado_final_090414_508.pdf
- Tornado Safety- <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/tornado.html>
- Tornado Safety- <https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado>

Looking for more information or have additional questions?

Please contact your Eastern Alliance Risk Management Consultant.