

TOOLBOX TALK #24

TORNADOES: A THREAT TO TAKE SERIOUSLY

Does your workplace really need to be prepared for the possibility of a tornado? The answer is “YES”. Tornadoes can occur anywhere and at any time, says OSHA, adding that an average of 800 tornadoes are reported across the nation every year. So what can employers do to help keep employees safe in the event of a tornado?



Know the signs

A tornado can form with little warning, so it's important to know the signs. A tornado may be imminent if the sky is dark with greenish clouds, you see a wall cloud and large hail is falling – or if you see a funnel cloud and hear a loud, roaring sound. Pay attention to weather reports and be alert for the possibility of a tornado. A tornado watch means that a tornado is likely to occur within the watch area. In this case, you and your employees should be prepared to quickly take shelter. If a tornado warning is issued in your area that means one has either been sighted or indicated by radar. Take shelter immediately.

Have a plan

First, identify an area where workers can best be protected, such as a basement or an interior room without windows on the lowest floor of the building. Refrain from sheltering in a place that has flat, wide-span roofs. Next, ensure site management has an accountability procedure. To help ensure the safety of workers:

- Have a system in place for knowing who is on site at all times
- Ensure the needs of workers with disabilities or who do not speak English are taken into consideration
- Establish an alarm system that alerts workers of a tornado. Test this system regularly
- Take a head count via a prepared roster to ensure every worker is accounted for
- Designate and train workers in advance to help in the event of a tornado
- Ensure all workers are trained to know what to do and where to go if a tornado strikes.
- Have emergency supply kits available in the designated tornado shelter areas