



THUNDERSTORM SAFETY

When there is thunder, there is lightning. Any outdoor job increases the risk of becoming a lightning victim. Dismissing the danger of storms when on a construction site can be detrimental. Lightning kills 10 percent of the people it strikes. The 90 percent who survive often suffer lifelong debilitating health consequences.

Here are a few guidelines for protecting workers from death and injury in thunderstorms:

- **Create a Lightning Safety Policy:** Add a section on lightning safety for construction crews to the safety manual. Construction workers may have a tendency to ignore the dangers of lightning, so insist they promptly follow the measures recommended when a thunderstorm approaches the jobsite.
- **Keep an Eye on the Sky:** Awareness of changing weather conditions is the first line of defense. Make sure your crew is aware of the person responsible for watching the weather reports before arriving at the job each day. Weather alert apps for smart phones keep workers advised of impending thunderstorms well in advance.
- **React Promptly to Weather Advisories:** Resist the temptation to finish the job in progress before taking shelter. Do not wait until you see lightning or rain. By the time you hear the thunder, you are already in striking distance of the lightning – even if the storm appears several miles away.
- **Unplug Equipment:** Have workers unplug any electrical tools, and stow them quickly out of the way.
- **Take Shelter in a Building:** Get all employees into a safe shelter. Close all doors and windows. Stay in the center of the structure, away from windows, exterior doors, electrical wiring and plumbing. NEVER take shelter in an open-sided building. Avoid small shelters, sheds and storage buildings. They provide little protection from lightning.
- **Take Shelter in a Vehicle:** If there is not a safe building at the site, have workers stay in their pickups or hard-topped cars during the storm. Do not park near trees, electrical poles, metal fences, scaffolding or other tall objects. Avoid rolling down windows, touching electronic equipment like the radio or leaning on the metal doors of the vehicle. Golf carts, ATVs, plastic or fiberglass body cars, convertible automobiles and open excavation equipment are NOT safe from lightning.
- **Remove Metal:** Contrary to myth, metal does not attract lightning. However, when struck by lightning, metal objects may cause severe burns. Have your workers remove tool belts, metal hard hats, safety harnesses and any other metallic objects they are wearing.
- **When Lightning Strikes:** Call 9-1-1 immediately if lightning strikes a crew member. If breathing or heartbeat has stopped, CPR-certified employees should give aid until professional help arrives. It is a myth that lightning victims carry a charge after the strike – they are safe to handle. Have fire extinguishers on the job site – especially if you’re working on a wood-framed structure.

[Download a recording form here.](#)