

# Construction Risk Insights

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## Preparing Job Sites for Severe Weather

Severe weather conditions can be detrimental to job sites, putting unintended strain on your business. While there's no way to completely guarantee your job site is protected from the elements, there are measures that can be taken to reduce the risks posed by extreme weather events.

### Securing Your Job Site

While each job site is different and requires unique planning to protect against severe weather, there are several general precautions that should be taken to protect every job site.

First, it is important to develop and educate all employees on an emergency action plan to be followed in the event of an unsafe weather condition. This plan should be as detailed as possible, easily accessible and well-practised. The plan should account for any exposures to the job site and address how to best protect the job site, its equipment and workers. Include assignments for everyone on the project or designate a few employees to lead the plan.

Secondly, it's important to monitor the weather for any incoming alerts or adverse conditions. Because extreme weather events can develop quickly, it is important to assign one person the task of monitoring the weather throughout the day. For this, it's valuable to have a weather radio or computer on hand at all times on the job site.

Especially for larger projects, it's a good practice to keep in communication with local building officials about their plans for extreme weather. This allows you not only to coordinate plans if necessary, but also to reassure the officials that your job site poses no threat to nearby properties or residents.

As soon as a severe storm is approaching, begin working through your emergency action plan to secure, remove or protect any and all equipment that may become a flying projectile in high winds or be adversely affected by the weather. Materials and equipment to keep in mind include:

- Dumpsters
- Portable bathrooms
- Cranes
- Fence screens
- Job site signage
- In-progress utility systems
- Electronics
- Project documents
- Hazardous chemicals

In the case of heavy rain or wind, unwelcome debris and water may find its way into your job site. To ensure quick cleanup and minimal resulting damage, set up water pumps before the storm approaches and have a plan to safely remove any additional water or debris after the storm has passed.

Next, secure the structure itself. If necessary, board up windows, doors and other openings that may expose the interior to harmful weather elements. To prevent flooding, create a sandbag perimeter.

Once the storm has passed, it's vital to perform an evaluation of the job site before work can resume. Practise extreme caution during the inspection and identify what equipment and areas need to be addressed to get the job back on track.

### Types of Weather Hazards

Extreme weather can come in many forms, each of which require their own methods of preparation in order to protect your job site. Before preparing your job site, it's important to understand the types of severe weather conditions that are most likely to affect it, which can vary based on season and location.

Possible severe weather conditions can be broken down into the following general exposures:

**Strong winds**—High winds can bring unwanted debris into the job site, throw equipment around and, in extreme cases, even compromise the integrity of a structure. To prepare for strong winds, store and secure loose construction materials, equipment and signage, and brace framing and anchor walls to the framework as soon as it is constructed. For any machinery, such as cranes and vehicles, follow manufacturer guidelines for proper operation and storage, and do not operate machinery during a storm.

**Heavy rain and flooding**—Water is one of the most damaging elements to any job site. Job sites with incomplete drainage may become flooded, and heavy rain can damage unprotected electrical equipment. To prepare for heavy rain and flooding, create and maintain temporary drainage systems in any areas that might be especially susceptible to flooding, and do not install finished elements such as flooring and drywall until windows, doors and the roof have been installed watertight. If necessary, install temporary roofs where installation of the permanent roof may be delayed.

**Winter conditions**—Winter weather brings its own unique set of exposures, many of which don't require a storm to pose a threat to your job site and employees. To protect against winter conditions, have all pathways cleared of snow and ice, and apply sand or salt immediately when necessary—consider hiring a contractor to perform these duties. Additionally, require all employees to wear high-traction footwear to prevent slipping. Monitor temperatures to avoid freezing exposed water systems, and provide warming stations and hot drinks to employees to prevent hypothermia, trench foot and frostbite.

Preparing for extreme weather can prevent unnecessary workplace accidents. Contact Awesome Content Cloud Performance for more information on preparing your job site for severe weather.

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