

# SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS AND YOUR BUSINESS

Natural Disasters



Severe thunderstorms can occur at any time – leading to property damage, power outages, or even employee injury. Preventive actions can help to protect your business, ensure the safety of your employees, minimize damage to your property and speed the recovery process.

## Before the Storm

- **Monitor for severe thunderstorms in your area.**
  - NOAA's National Weather Service  
<http://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/wwa/>
- **Know the warning system for your community.**
  - Learn the thunderstorm warning system for your county or locality.
- **Know the terminology.**
  - A **severe thunderstorm WATCH** means storms are likely in your area—be ready to take necessary action.
  - A **severe thunderstorm WARNING** means storms have been reported by spotters or indicated by radar – Take immediate action to stay safe.
- **Establish shelter locations on your property.**
  - Choose a place where there are no windows, skylights, or glass doors.
  - Have enough room for all employees, any customers or suppliers who may be at your business during the hazardous situation.
  - Stock the shelter with emergency supplies such as flashlights, battery powered radio, and a first aid kit.
- **Prepare your employees.**
  - Inform your employees of the business emergency plan; review it with them regularly.
  - Ensure employees know the location of the sheltering area.
- **Make plans regarding customers.**
  - Determine the likelihood of customers being present if a severe storm situation.
  - Have an emergency plan for customers; review it with employees regularly.
  - Label shelter locations for the building.
- **Have a business emergency/continuity plan.**
  - Be prepared for power outages.
  - Determine any essential equipment or processes that rely on electrical power.
  - Have emergency power (e.g., backup generators) available.
  - Maintain an inventory of all equipment and assets for your business in the event of structural damage.
  - Install surge protectors to protect electronic equipment.

## Identify potential hazards on your property.

- Secure unstable materials that are outside your business (e.g., lumber, equipment, fuel tanks).
- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.
- Check the roof for signs of deterioration or leaks; make sure all drains and gutters are clear.

## During A Severe Thunderstorm

- **Stay informed.**
  - Listen to the radio or television about the situation.
- **If a WARNING is issued – Seek shelter immediately.**
- **Lightning safety tips.**
  - Avoid contact with corded phones; cordless and cellular telephones are safe to use.
  - Avoid contact with electrical equipment; if you plan to unplug any electronic equipment, do so before the storm arrives.

## After a Severe Thunderstorm

- **Assess the situation.**
  - Survey the outside and inside of the building for structural damage, sharp objects, downed power lines, damaged gas lines, or other hazards (e.g., chemicals).
- **Contact your insurance agent to report any losses and obtain advice about restoration needs.**
- **Clean up safely.**
  - Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves for protection.
  - Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated.
  - Report any hazardous materials (e.g., fuels, agricultural chemicals) that have leaked to emergency response personnel.
- **If someone has been injured by lightning,**
  - Call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services.
  - Check the person for burns or other injuries; being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, loss of hearing or eyesight.
  - If breathing has stopped, begin rescue breathing
  - If the heart has stopped beating, a trained person should give CPR

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