

## **SEVERE WEATHER DOESN'T ALWAYS COME WITH A WARNING. BE READY.**

Lightning storms, tornadoes, hailstorms, floods, hurricanes — when severe weather bears down, you need to be as well prepared as possible.

## **YOUR BUILDING MIGHT BE A NATURAL TARGET FOR LIGHTNING**

When it comes to lightning striking objects, a building with high peaks is extremely vulnerable. Typically, the building is located between large parking lots and vast expanses of wide open grounds that offer little protection. And if your building is hit, all the air conditioning, audiovisual and extensive electronic equipment can act as conductors, sending current throughout your structure.

## **LIGHTNING RODS — PROTECTION THROUGH PREVENTION**

Your best protection against lightning damage is a lightning protection system that has been certified by the Lightning Protection Institute (LPI) or Underwriters Laboratories (UL).

Contact these organizations for more information about equipment, installation and maintenance of lightning protection systems. Their addresses and phone numbers are printed toward the back of this booklet.

## **KEEP PEOPLE SAFE FROM LIGHTNING**

An average of 40 people per year are killed by lightning in the United States. Although some situations are unavoidable, risks can be decreased by taking the proper precautions during a thunderstorm. While you're inside the building, stay clear of open doors and windows. Also, get away from large appliances which can conduct lightning. And don't use the phone except in emergency situations.

If you're caught outside the building, try to find immediate protection. Don't touch metal fences or objects and don't seek protection under lone trees, taller trees or in unprotected shelter structures.

If you are hiking, a cave or cliff overhang is one of the safest areas to seek shelter. Keep the people in your group spread a few feet apart. If a cave or overhang isn't available, head for a low spot. Or seek shelter in a clump of head-high bushes.

If you're at the beach, leave as soon as lightning is spotted. Do the same if you're on a pier, dock or boat. Once lightning is present, get out of any body of water immediately, whether it's a pool, lake or ocean.

You can also decrease your chances of being struck by keeping away from railroad tracks and out of open spaces.

## **WIND DAMAGE — HOW TO LESSEN THE BLOW**

High winds can occur at any time, whether they are associated with a tornado, hurricane, severe storm or just a change in atmospheric conditions. With the proper preparation, you can protect your facility from the havoc and destruction caused by ill winds.

### **OK NEEDS WORK**

Keep buildings free from overhanging branches and trees.

Immediately replace broken windows and doors.

Check latches on doors and windows.

Install storm windows and keep them securely closed.

## PROTECT YOUR FACILITY FROM HIGH WATER

When the rain refuses to stop and rivers begin to swell, your chances of protecting your building and its contents from significant damage greatly increase if you've taken steps to waterproof your building. A few of the ways you can minimize property damage include:

### OK NEEDS WORK

Repair basement cracks and leaks, which invite water problems.

Contact a local contractor for information or an evaluation of the condition of your basement walls.

Keep valuable equipment like electrical appliances, woodwork or antiques off the floor with pallets or bricks.

Check gutters regularly to keep them free from leaves and twigs.

Check window sills during rainstorms for dampness due to leaks. Caulk leaks and cracks immediately.

During rainstorms, watch for moisture leaks in the roof and ceiling. Repair leaks as soon as possible.

Move valuable property to safe areas.

Run a dehumidifier in damp places, making sure excess water is drained properly and the cord is kept out of water.

Place rocks or bricks under downspouts to prevent erosion damage.

Plant or maintain trees, shrubs and grass to prevent erosion damage.

## FLOOD STAGE — PLANNING, NOT PANICKING

Taking the proper precautionary measures before a flood occurs can make the storm less traumatic and less costly in terms of damage.

### OK NEEDS WORK

Check with local planning office to see how close your facilities are to a flood plain.

Prepare and know your evacuation route.

Know how and when to shut off utilities: electricity, gas and water.

Keep materials — such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting and lumber— on hand.

Install check valves in building sewer traps to prevent water from backing up in sewer drains.

Keep first-aid supplies on hand.

Keep automobiles fueled.

Keep a stock of food that requires little cooking.

Keep emergency cooking equipment, lights and flashlights in working order.

## UNDERSTANDING THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE'S WATCH/ WARNING SYSTEM

Your preparedness for a severe storm depends on your knowledge of the National Weather Service's watch/warning system. Keep portable radios and televisions at your facility to take full advantage of alerts.

**Tornado or severe thunderstorm watch** — tornadoes and/or severe thunderstorms are possible (conditions are right).

**Tornado or severe thunderstorm warning** — tornadoes and/or severe thunderstorms are occurring. The National Weather Service defines a severe thunderstorm as having winds of 58 miles per hour or more and/or hail of ¾-inch in diameter or larger.

In most localities, an outdoor siren warning system will alert you when an emergency situation exists. Generally, a continuous siren for three minutes in duration is used as a tornado warning. When you hear it, immediately tune to local television or radio to learn specifics. Wavering sirens also could be used for other alerts and warnings. Make sure you know your local warning signals.

## REACTING TO A WARNING

If a tornado or severe thunderstorm warning occurs while you're in a building, do not leave. Seek shelter in storm cellars or well-constructed basements. If neither of these options exist, take cover under a sturdy table, desk or stairway in the lowest floor of the building, or in a closet or bathroom in the center of the building.

Do not open windows. Most structures have sufficient venting to allow for the sudden drop in atmospheric pressure. Opening a window, once thought to be the way to allow inside and outside pressure to equalize, thereby minimizing damage, is not recommended. Furthermore, opening the wrong window can actually increase damage.

Remember, stay in your protected area for at least 15 to 30 minutes after the thunderstorm.

**For additional weather safety information, contact:**

**National Safety Council**

or your local gas, electric and fire departments.

**National Weather Service**

1325 East West Highway

Silver Spring, MD 20910

(301) 713-0689

[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)

**Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.**

2600 N.W. Lake Road

Camas, WA 98607

(877) 854-3577

[www.ul.com](http://www.ul.com)

**Lightning Protection Institute**

P.O. Box 99

Maryville, MO 64468

(800) 488-6864

[www.lightning.org](http://www.lightning.org)

In most cases, information is free.

**Emergency Telephone Numbers:**

Police:

Fire:

Gas:

Electric:

Ambulance:

Hospital:

CM Select Insurance Company: (800) 200-5864

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