SAFETY BULLETIN #3

March 18, 2024

Severe Weather Readiness



Severe Weather - Flooding, Tornadoes, Hail, Lightning, High Winds

- ★ What is severe weather readiness?
  - Weather can turn severe in seconds. Lightning, flash floods, hail, straight-line winds, and tornadoes all result from thunderstorms. All team members must be familiar with these weather hazards and know how to minimize impacts to themselves, other team members, and to the general public.

Weather Hazards

- ★ Flooding - Heavy or excessive rain can create flash flooding with minimal notice.
  - Construction job sites are susceptible to flood damage when drainage systems are not completely installed, fences turn into debris barriers, erosion control devices are overtopped, and so forth.
  - Keep equipment, tools, trailers, and materials safely stored out of flood prone areas.
  - Before a rain event, identify potential areas of flooding and the status of erosion control devices. Ask yourself if current construction activities could cause flooding upstream or downstream. Inspect and repair erosion control devices after each weather event.
  - Moving water 2’ deep is sufficient to carry away a truck or SUV. Do not drive equipment or trucks through flood waters. Do not wade into flood waters.
  - Flood waters can hide washed out culverts/low water bridges.
  - In the US, there are approximately 80-90 deaths annually due to flash flooding.
- ★ Tornadoes - The peak seasons for tornadoes are spring and fall.
  - Watch vs Warning: A tornado watch is when conditions are favorable for a tornado. A tornado warning is when a tornado has been sighted or is radar indicated.
  - Know your safe shelter location. Put as many walls between you and the outside. Avoid areas with windows; below ground is best.
  - Avoid taking shelter under an overpass. The rotating winds surrounding a tornado often throw debris and are capable of pulling an individual out from beneath the bridge.

- The Project Lead is responsible for watching weather reports, checking radars, listening for tornado sirens, and calling evacuations.

★ Wind - In advance of storms or on days predicted to be windy, properly store and secure materials.
- High winds can easily lift sheets of metal and plywood, creating projectiles.
- Install temporary windbreaks or cover loose materials such as sand, topsoil, and mulch. These can erode and become airborne skin and eye irritants.
- High winds can easily destroy partially built structures such as walls, roof coverings, and forms.
- Do not work on elevated surfaces or platforms during high wind events or storms.

★ Lightning - Lightning causes thunder. If you hear thunder, you are in danger of lightning.
- Arkansas has more than 800,000 cloud-to-ground lightning flashes per year. In the US, there are approximately 30 deaths annually due to lighting strikes.
- Lightning tends to strike tall objects and can strike as far as 10 miles away from a thunderstorm cloud.
- Do not take shelter in small sheds, pavilions, tents, or under trees. Avoid hilltops, nearby poles, and towers. Move away from chain link fences and other metal fences.
- If in, on, or near water, get away and onto the shore immediately.
- If a person is struck by lightning, they will not retain any electrical charge. Contact emergency response immediately and provide the individual with medical assistance.

★ Hail - Hail storms occur as a result of updrafts in severe thunderstorms.
- If hail is forecasted, relocate equipment, tool trailers, and trucks in covered areas to prevent damage.
- If driving, stop. Park under an overpass, service station awning, carwash bay, bank drive-thru, or similar to minimize impact.
- Individuals should seek shelter indoors. Shelter under trees is not recommended due to the possibility of limb loss during the storm.

Discussion Points:

★ What severe weather hazards exist at this jobsite?

★ What responsibilities does each team member have in securing the jobsite before and after a weather event?

★ What is the Project Lead's plan of action in the event of a tornado at this construction site? Are all team members familiar with this plan?