

Lightning Safety On The Job

Some workers are at greater risk than others

People who work outdoors in open spaces, on or near tall objects, with explosives, or with conductive materials such as metal have a large exposure to lightning risks. Workers in these occupations are among those with the most risk:

- Logging
- Explosives handling or storage
- Heavy equipment operation
- Plumbing and pipefitting
- Construction and building maintenance
- Farming and field labor
- Telecommunications field repair
- Power utility field repair

When thunderstorms threaten, don't start anything you can't quickly stop

Pay attention to the daily forecasts so you know what to expect during the day. Also pay attention to early signs of thunderstorms: high winds, dark clouds, rain, distant thunder or lightning. At this point, do not start any new task that you can't quickly stop.

Know your company's lightning safety warning program

Businesses that have high risk functions – such as explosives storage or field repairs during severe weather – should have a formal lightning warning policy that meets these two basic requirements:

1. Lightning danger warnings can be issued in time for everyone to get to safe location.
2. Access to a safe place.

Assess your lightning risk and take precautionary action

During thunderstorms, no place outside is safe. But you can minimize your risk by assessing the lightning threat and taking the appropriate actions. Count the number of seconds from when you see the lightning flash until you hear the thunder. If you count 30 seconds or less you are in immediate danger. Stop what you're doing and seek safety in a substantial building. If a substantial building is not available, a metal-topped vehicle with the windows up is your next best choice.

Objects and equipment to avoid during thunderstorms

- Stay off of and away from anything tall or high, including rooftops, scaffolding, utility poles, ladders, trees, and large equipment such as bulldozers, cranes, backhoes, track loaders, and tractors.
- Do not touch materials or surfaces that can conduct electricity, including metal scaffolding, metal equipment, utility lines, water, water pipes, and plumbing.
- Leave areas with explosives or munitions.

If a co-worker is struck by lightning

The victim does not carry any electrical charge. Call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Management Services phone number. If the victim's heart stopped or they stopped breathing, immediately administer CPR.