Severe Weather: Don't Get Caught in the Rain

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The National Weather Service defines “severe” weather as any aspect of weather which can pose a threat to life and property. Among the most common and most dangerous weather events are thunderstorms which produce lightning, hail, and strong winds. A few changes in the environment that may indicate a severe weather emergency could be a sudden increase in wind or change in wind direction, darkening/billowing clouds, or distant flashes of lightning and sound of thunder. Since disasters occur with little to no warning, outside workers must have a heightened awareness of the environment they are in and what precautions to take for each type of emergency.

An emergency action plan, specific to each location, must be communicated to each employee. This may be done by employee training or communication through a toolbox talk. As required by OSHA, the following elements must be included in the plan:

- Emergency escape procedure and emergency escape route/shelter assignments
- Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical plant/site operations
- Procedures to account for all employees once evacuation is complete

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**FUN FACTS**

What do clouds wear under their clothes?
Thunder-wear!
(just a joke, not an actual fact)

Grand Theft Auto 5 cost £170 million (approximately $266 million) to make and market, officially the most expensive game ever.
Rescue and medical duties for those employees who are to perform them

Training employees on the common severe weather emergencies associated with their geographical location will help each individual to be aware of their surroundings, know what to look for, and when to put the emergency action plan into place. Preparing for the after effects of a storm is just as important as the steps to take before disaster strikes. A disaster supply kit is a great tool to have at any shelter location, vehicle, and medical treatment area. Recommended items to include in the kit are:

- Water
- Food – non-perishable, easy to prepare items
- Flashlight
- Battery powered radio
- Extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Medications/medical items
- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation/personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents
- Cell phone with chargers
- Family and emergency contact information
- Emergency blanket
- Map of the area

A study on lightning conducted in Florida found that the average distance between one lightning strike hitting the ground and the next was two to three miles. Just remember that lightning can come from the anvil portion of the thunderstorm, which is the mature stage of a storm, and strike the ground 10 to 15 miles from the rain portion of the storm. So, just because you are estimating lightning at a distance of 2 or 4 miles away, doesn’t mean that the next strike won't be right next to you!

A simple rule to remember is this: If you hear thunder, take action immediately.
With the implementation of an emergency action plan, a disaster supply kit, and providing tips on how to spot an approaching weather event, employees may feel more at ease while working outdoors.