

## Inclement Weather Awareness While on the Job

The weather can be an unpredictable force, and try as we might, it's impossible to perfectly foresee what Mother Nature will throw at us next, or how severe it may be. One of the main things to keep an eye out for is inclement weather, which is classified as any severe or harsh weather condition that makes it unsafe or impractical to travel, commute, or work outdoors.<sup>1</sup> Any abnormal or harsh climatic conditions, such as severe snow, sleet, frigid temperatures, heavy rain, hurricanes, high winds, tornadoes, drought, and wildfires, all fall into the category of inclement weather.

During these events, normal work of a non-emergency nature should be carefully evaluated, as it may not be reasonable or safe to be exposed to any of these conditions, or possible to continue working in a safe manner during regular working hours.

### Forecast Alerts

Pay attention to the National Weather Service as they issue watches, warnings, and advisories across various media channels. Listen and watch for sirens or alerts that may dictate if you and your employees should avoid travel, seek shelter, or be prepared to weather a storm for a period of time.

### A Dangerous Commute

Wherever you work, severe weather can impact any type of travel. Driving already comes with plenty of risks, but a daily commute can turn even more dangerous as harsh weather sets in. If you live in a climate that often has high chances of inclement weather, preparing well in advance before it strikes is a good idea. Keep emergency kits in your vehicle, let others know your destination, and be sure your cell phone is charged in case you need to call emergency services. Remember, what may not be considered inclement weather in some parts of the country could be devastating in others. For example, consider the impact of snow in southern states, where they lack snowplows and de-icing equipment.

### Weather Procedures

You should prepare emergency preparedness procedures in advance of inclement weather to provide clarity for all employees. Avoid ambiguity, and create clear guidelines to follow so that employees know how to act or react. Consider things such as:

- Conveying communication protocols before a weather event occurs.
- Offering temporary remote work, if possible.
- Sheltering or evacuation procedures.
- Worker safety for those on location or working in the field.

Inclement weather can occur at any time, and has been increasing in severity and frequency in recent years.<sup>2</sup> The impacts of inclement weather can be dangerous, devastating, and long-lasting. Knowing the signs and signals of inclement weather could help to save lives. Pay attention to the weather forecast and plan in advance before you or your workers step outside.

1. <https://www.alertmedia.com/blog/inclement-weather-policy/> February 9, 2021. Accessed on 8/16/2021.
2. <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/weather-climate> Accessed on 8/23/2021.

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