Lightning toolbox talk: lightning safety on the job

29 CFR 1910.38, 1926.451, 1926.21

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If you heard thunder right now, where would you go and who would make the call to stop work?

Why it matters

Lightning can strike far from the rain. Open ground, high places, tall equipment and metal put outdoor workers at the most risk. The safest choice is to stop work and get inside before the storm is close. OSHA has no general lightning safety standard for outdoor work, so protection depends on your site's emergency plan and on everyone knowing it.

Key points

1. **Know who calls it and what the signal is**
   Before the storm, your crew needs to know who stops work, how the alarm sounds and where to go. If your workplace has an emergency action plan, it must include procedures for reporting emergencies and for evacuation, including exit route assignments (29 CFR 1910.38(c)(1) and (c)(2)). The alarm must use a distinctive signal (29 CFR 1910.38(d)).
   29 CFR 1910.38(c)(2)

2. **Go to a safe shelter early**
   A fully enclosed building or a hard-topped vehicle with the windows up is the safest choice. Do not shelter under a tree, a pop-up tent, a porch roof or an open shed. Do not wait for rain. If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck.

3. **Get down from high places and away from tall equipment**
   Come down from roofs, ladders, scaffolds, lifts and towers right away. Stay away from cranes, poles and other tall objects. Work on or from scaffolds is prohibited during storms or high winds unless a competent person has determined it is safe and the employees are protected (29 CFR 1926.451(f)(12)).
   29 CFR 1926.451(f)(12)

4. **Stay away from metal and water**
   Put down metal tools, ladders and pipe. Stay off metal fences, rebar and open water. Do not use plug-in tools or corded equipment during a storm. Do not stand in puddles or next to wet, bare ground.

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5 **Account for everyone**

Once people are in shelter, take a headcount. An emergency action plan must have procedures to account for all employees after evacuation (29 CFR 1910.38(c)(4)). Tell the supervisor who is missing. Do not send people out to look until it is safe.

6 **Do not rush back out**

The danger does not end when the rain stops. Follow your plan for how long to wait after the last thunder before work restarts. The emergency action plan must be reviewed with employees when it is developed, when it changes and when their responsibilities change (29 CFR 1910.38(f)).

29 CFR 1910.38(f)(1)

Scenario

Picture this: A roofing crew is finishing the last section on a hot afternoon. A dark cloud builds to the west and the foreman hears distant thunder. The crew wants to finish in fifteen minutes. One worker is on a metal ladder, another is holding a pipe and a third is walking toward a tree for shade. What should the foreman do right now?

Crew discussion

1. Where do we shelter on this site, and could everyone fit?
2. Who has the authority to stop work for weather?
3. How would we find out about approaching storms during the day?
4. How do we make sure we account for everyone after we take shelter?

Bottom line **When you hear thunder, stop work, get to a safe shelter and count heads before anyone goes back out.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Lightning safety / Seguridad contra rayos

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

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