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Know When  
To Seek Counsel*



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## Reminders for Keeping Employees Safe During Severe Weather

Good planning and preparation is key for any organization and its employees to survive a natural disaster. A little planning can prevent unnecessary panic and confusion.

Tornados can strike at wind speeds of up to 300 mph. They are most destructive when they touch ground and typically stay on the ground about 20 minutes. An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible. Before a tornado, the wind might die down, and the air might become very still.

If a severe weather alert is in effect, please remind managers and employees of your organization's severe weather plan. Part of your severe weather policy should be a process of notifying your employees. Some businesses have a recorded voicemail that employees can call into verify if they can either come in late or if the office is closed. Other businesses set up phone trees, send an email blast or use social media sites to notify employees.

Procedures for responding to customers should also be in place. This could be leaving a greeting on your main phone line alerting customers that they will receive a response on the next business day because the office is closed.

### Staying Open

If your office decides to stay open during inclement weather, there may be risks for your business. It is understandable that due to the nature of some businesses, closing is not an option. At minimum, you should review your business's insurance policy to make sure it covers accidents on company property caused by inclement weather conditions.

Generally, in times of severe weather, employees should be reminded to avoid:

- Locations where roofs are likely to be blown off, such as windward edges (usually the south and west), long spans, portions with loadbearing wall supports and portions with overhangs on the windward sides;
- Exterior walls that are most likely to be partially or completely destroyed. The most likely damage to these walls will occur in the following order: south, west, east, north;
- Corridors with exterior doors allowing direct exit to the south, west, east, north, in order of severity of wind tunnels;
- Assume winds will blow in the south and west sides of the building and occasionally on the east and north; and
- Portions of buildings containing load bearing walls.

Managers should have the following items handy:

- Cellular Telephone
- First Aid Kit
- Floor plan for the building/office
- Flashlights
- Weather radio
- Phone numbers for local emergency services

*For additional information on Employment or Labor Law issues, please contact TAMMY MEADE ENSSLIN at 859-963-9049.*

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