

## **Make Sure to Heed Thunder's Roar**

**Q:** As someone whose employees do a lot of outdoor work, I'm concerned about severe weather. Are there any special dangers involved in working during a rain shower or thunderstorm? What about lightning? What precautions need to be taken?

**A:** Seasonal weather can often be unpredictable weather, and thunderstorms—and the lightning that accompanies them—can be particularly dangerous.

Lightning is the most dangerous and frequently encountered weather hazard. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), there are approximately 200 deaths and more than 750 severe injuries from lightning every year in the U.S.

You can minimize the danger of lightning strikes if you know what steps to take to protect yourself during a thunderstorm:

### **Tip #1: Seek Shelter**

Where possible, find shelter in a substantial building or in a fully enclosed metal vehicle. Make sure all windows are completely shut and stay away from them and doors. Avoid contact with anything that conducts electricity, including landline telephones. Do not touch external objects such as radio dials, metal door handles, two-way radio microphones, etc.

### **Tip #2: Protect Yourself Outdoors**

Experts recommend avoiding water, high ground, open spaces, solitary trees and all metal objects, including electric wires, circuits and switches, fences, metal doors, machinery, motors and power tools. If you're in a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees. In an open area, go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.

If you're in an open area and feel your hair standing on end, it's an indication that you're in lightning's electric field. Remove any metal objects, crouch down and put your feet together. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact to the ground. Do not lie flat, since lightning can travel through the ground and cause significant injury.

### **Tip #3: What to Do if You're Operating Heavy Equipment**

Backhoes, bulldozers, loaders, graders, scrapers, mowers and other heavy equipment that employs an enclosed rollover systems canopy (ROPS) are safe in nearby electrical storms.



## Safety Article for Chamber or Group Use

---

Workers who operate such equipment should shut it down, close the doors and sit with their hands in their laps while waiting out the storm. Under no circumstances during close-in lightning should a worker try to step off the equipment to the ground in an attempt to find another shelter.

**Accompanying blurb:**

This article was reproduced with permission from Accident Fund Insurance Company of America. Founded in 1912 and rated "A" (Excellent) by A.M. Best, Accident Fund offers low-cost group rates with a 5% up-front discount on workers compensation insurance as well as possible long-term dividends. Contact Theresa Ross (517) 281-9813 or Beth Goodman (517) 202-5121 for more information.