

Hurricanes are a form of tropical cyclones that are capable of causing catastrophic damage. They can have wind speeds exceeding 155 miles per hour and typically have the greatest impact on coastal areas. Hurricane season runs from mid-May through November. However, unlike tornadoes that can occur with little to no warning, you often know days in advance when a hurricane is going to hit.

Employers need to have an emergency plan in place for dealing with a number of disasters, including hurricanes. It should include suitable locations to take shelter, policies to ensure that you and all your colleagues are accounted for as well as procedures for addressing any hazardous materials that may harm you or others on site. It's a good idea to develop a similar plan of action for you and your family away from work as well.

If you are preparing for a hurricane, be aware of your surroundings and whether your company or personal property is flood-prone. This will help you know how your property or place of employment will be affected if storm surge or tidal flooding occur. Additionally, familiarize yourself with any levees and dams in your area to determine whether they pose a hazard to you. Familiarize yourself with hurricane evacuation routes, where to go and how to get there if you need to evacuate. Make sure to cover all of your home's or your work facility's windows. Consider permanent storm shutters to protect windows, if you don't have them.

Before the storm you should also bring any equipment or items that could potentially become debris or get damaged. Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts and reinforce garage doors; if wind enters a garage it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage. Also consider installing straps or additional clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure. This will reduce roof damage. In the event you are forced to ride out a hurricane in a high-rise building, you should take shelter on a lower floor and in a small interior room without windows. If flooding may occur, be prepared to take shelter on a floor safely above the flooding and wave effects.

After the storm has passed, restoration and recovery efforts present another set of hazardous conditions including downed electrical wires, carbon monoxide and electrical hazards from portable generators, fall and "struck-by" hazards from tree trimming or working at heights, being caught in unprotected excavations or confined spaces, burns, lacerations, musculoskeletal injuries, being struck by traffic or heavy equipment, and encountering contaminated water during flood cleanup. Be sure to get additional information on restoration hazards and precautions needed.



DISCUSSION QUESTION

What should you do to prepare for a hurricane?