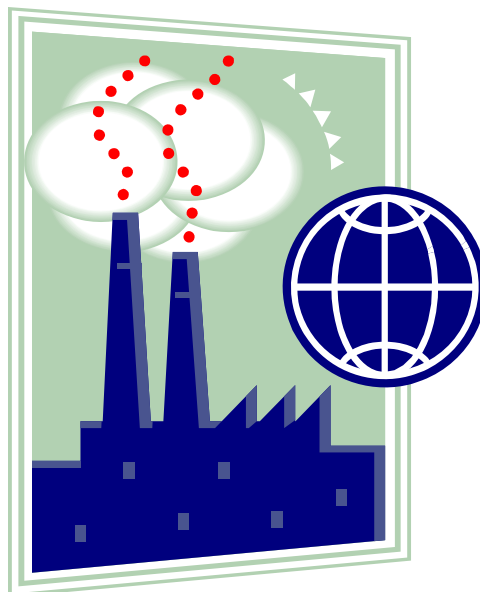


## **SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PITTSBURGH**

Joint Labor/  
Management Safety  
Committee



THE JOINT LABOR/MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITTEE asks that all employees of the District join us in raising awareness of the monthly safety topic by sharing the enclosed information with others.

**School District of  
Pittsburgh**

Finance/Risk Management  
1305 Muriel Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15203

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**May 2011 is**

**Severe Weather Awareness Month**

**Please post in a prominent location  
at your workplace for the other  
employees to see.**

## **Types of Severe Weather**

The United States is home to an astounding range of climates and ecosystems, from the frozen tundra of northern Alaska to the sun-baked desert of southern Arizona. While we can't cover every type of severe weather there are a few common types that are important to understand:

- > [Tornadoes](#)
- > [Hurricanes](#)
- > [Electrical storms](#)

The more you know about these three types, the better you can prepare your family and property for surviving a storm in safety. If severe weather is approaching your area now, seek shelter and listen to your radio for emergency instructions from local officials.

### **Tornadoes**

A tornado is nature's most violent form of severe weather. With an average wind speed of 112 mph, they can produce winds up to 300 mph - capable of destroying all but the strongest structures.

Tornadoes appear most often during spring when weather patterns are shifting. However, they've been reported during every month of the year - even in the middle of winter. Some 800 to 1,000 tornadoes appear in the U.S. every year, causing millions of dollars in damage and many deaths.

"Tornado Alley," which runs from Texas north through east Nebraska and northeast to Indiana, is the most common site for twisters. However, they can be found in all 50 states.

Tornadoes usually originate from thunderstorms that develop when warm, damp air is suddenly lifted by a cold front or afternoon heating. As this air mass rises, it cools. Its moisture condenses into rain or freezes into hail. Shifting air currents within this new storm form areas of rotating winds that can build up tremendous speed and touch the ground as tornadoes.

While they can form at any time of day or night, about 80% of all tornadoes occur between noon and midnight. Contrary to what you see in movies, tornadoes do not "suck" houses, cows, witches on bicycles, or people up into the funnel. On the other hand, their strong winds can lift and move large objects such as a car hundreds of feet. One tornado can devastate an entire town in less than 5 minutes.

### **Hurricanes**

Hurricanes don't blow as hard as tornadoes, but they can often cause far more damage because of their sheer size - sometimes hundreds of miles across. In fact, the total energy contained in a single major hurricane can be equal to that of several dozen nuclear bombs. What's more, one hurricane can spin off many tornadoes if conditions are right.

Most hurricanes that strike our country originate in the Atlantic ocean off the coast of West Africa. They gather strength and speed as they move westward across the ocean, then northward through the Caribbean Sea toward the United States. Florida, Texas, the Gulf Coast and the Carolinas are all familiar with the devastation hurricanes can bring. Many other states up the Eastern seaboard have also been hit hard over the years, with most of the damage coming within 20 miles of the coast.

"Hurricane season" usually begins in late spring and continues until early November when the Atlantic waters finally cool off for the winter. Thanks to advances in satellite technology and weather forecasting, most hurricanes are tracked far in advance, giving coastal residents plenty of time to prepare and evacuate when necessary. Weather officials usually expect anywhere from 5 to 25 "named hurricanes" per year, with many more tropical storms as well.

Storm surge is one of the most dangerous aspects of any major hurricane. Tides can rise suddenly, crashing billions of gallons of water into unprotected areas. The devastation you see on television after a major hurricane is usually caused by both wind and water. It's this deadly combination that some people forget when they try to "ride out" the storm.

## **Electrical Storms**

Thunderstorms aren't as deadly as tornadoes, but they occur far more often and can cause tremendous damage. A large thunderhead cloud is capable of discharging billions of volts of electrical energy - enough to start a major fire, knock out a communications system or bring down an airplane. The electronic appliances we depend on today are often the most vulnerable to electrical storms.

Most thunderstorms last for less than an hour, and they typically occur during spring and summer when conditions are right. Upper atmosphere collisions between low-pressure and high-pressure fronts can produce a long line of thunderstorms stretching for dozens - even hundreds - of miles.

While thunderstorms may be entertaining to watch, they carry a deadly threat that should never be ignored. Every year, dozens of Americans are killed or seriously injured by lightning strikes. Tragically, most of these deaths could have been avoided.

## **Warning Signs of Severe Weather**

Weather forecasting is not an exact science and dangerous weather can occur almost any time. That's why it's important to learn the warning signs of severe weather.

If you suspect that a tornado, hurricane or other violent storm is entering your area, check your local radio or television station for advisories. But remember that storms can develop rapidly and could strike your area before a formal warning is issued.

Keep your eyes and ears open. Pay attention to blowing debris, hail and the roaring train-like sound of an approaching tornado. If you live in a coastal area, heed all hurricane advisories and take appropriate action.

### **It's also important to understand these important terms:**

- **Tornado watch** - Conditions are right for the possible formation of tornadoes, dangerous thunderstorms and high winds. Postpone outdoor activities in your area and stay tuned for regular weather updates.
- **Tornado warning** - Actual tornadoes have been sighted in your area.
- **Hurricane watch** - A major hurricane or tropical storm is approaching your area. Stay tuned to local radio and television stations for regular updates. Heed the advice of local officials.
- **Hurricane warning** - An actual hurricane is headed toward your area. You can expect winds of 74 mph or greater as well as high tides and rough seas within 24 hours.

## **What Belongs in an Emergency Kit**

When trouble strikes, it's helpful to have an emergency kit handy - something that's accessible to your entire family. Here are some things you may want to include in a waterproof container:

**Food Items:**

- ✦ Bottled water
- ✦ Bread
- ✦ Crackers
- ✦ Cookies, snacks
- ✦ Canned fruit
- ✦ Canned meat, fish
- ✦ Dried fruit
- ✦ Canned/boxed beverages
- ✦ Fruit drinks
- ✦ Peanut Butter

**Non-Food Items:**

- ✦ Plastic forks and cups
- ✦ Napkins
- ✦ Can opener (non-electric)
- ✦ Batteries for flashlights and radio
- ✦ Plastic trash bags
- ✦ Charcoal
- ✦ Water purifying tablets
- ✦ Flashlights
- ✦ Candles and matches
- ✦ Clothing and bedding
- ✦ Extra socks and underwear
- ✦ Pillows
- ✦ Sleeping bag and blankets
- ✦ Washcloth and towel for each person
- ✦ Soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste
- ✦ Deodorant
- ✦ Shaving kit
- ✦ Contact lens solution
- ✦ Hair care items and mirror
- ✦ Dentures
- ✦ Sanitary napkins and tampons
- ✦ Paper towels, toilet paper
- ✦ Hearing aid batteries
- ✦ Watch or clock

**First Aid Kit:**

Keep contents of first aid kit in a waterproof metal or plastic box.

- ✦ Prescription medicines (four-week supply)
- ✦ Bandages and Band-Aids
- ✦ Antiseptic
- ✦ Adhesive tape rolls
- ✦ Aspirin
- ✦ Ibuprofen
- ✦ Allergy medication
- ✦ Insect repellent
- ✦ First aid handbook
- ✦ Scissors
- ✦ Antibacterial soap

- ✦ Safety pins
- ✦ Thermometer
- ✦ Needle (for splinters)

**Items for Infants:**

- ✦ Clothes
- ✦ Diapers and baby wipes
- ✦ Milk or formula
- ✦ Powders, creams or ointments
- ✦ Bottles and nipples
- ✦ Baby food
- ✦ Sheets, blankets, rubber pads
- ✦ Portable crib
- ✦ Plastic bags
- ✦ Pacifiers
- ✦ Small toys, don't forget stuffed animals.

Weather can often be very dangerous because it is very powerful and unpredictable. One reason why the study of weather is so important is because of severe weather. In the case of severe storms, the more notice that a storm is coming, the greater human chance of survival. The key is to be prepared for anything.

