Lightning and storms toolbox talk

Weather and environment · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

The South African Weather Service warns that lightning is a real and serious danger, particularly in the eastern half of South Africa, one of the most lightning-prone countries in the world. The highest densities are over Mpumalanga, Limpopo and parts of northern KwaZulu-Natal. Building workers are outdoors, often high up on roofs and scaffolds, surrounded by steel, and afternoon and evening thunderstorms are common in summer.

SAY THIS

If you can hear thunder, you are in danger

The Weather Service's rule is simple: if you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to be dangerous. Do not wait for the rain to start or for the flashes to come overhead. When the first thunder rolls, outdoor work stops. Nobody stays on to finish the last few blocks or the last sheet of roofing.

Where to go

Shelter in a proper, fully enclosed building, or inside a vehicle with the windows closed. Get off roofs, scaffolds, ladders, cranes and plant first. Stay away from open ground, high points, trees, metal fences, poles, water, and temporary structures such as shade-net shelters and tents.

If you are caught in the open

If there is truly no shelter, spread out so that one strike does not hit the whole team. Crouch down low with your feet together, keep as little of your body touching the ground as possible, and do not lie flat. Staying together in a group feels safer, but it is not.

Plan before the storm

The Weather Service says most lightning injuries and deaths can be prevented by being aware, being prepared and acting in time. Take every lightning warning seriously. In summer we check the weather forecast every morning. The supervisor decides who calls a stop and where everyone will shelter. Before an afternoon storm, tie down or put away loose roof sheeting, plastic, shade-net and anything else the wind can pick up. Secure the edges of excavations and keep water away from trenches and from leads and the DB board. The Weather Service says to wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder before starting again, and we go back only when the supervisor says so.

If someone is struck

A person struck by lightning does not carry an electrical charge, so it is safe to touch and help them. Call for an ambulance and the first aider immediately. Someone trained in CPR should start it if needed. Then report what happened to the supervisor.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Check today's weather forecast and warnings with the crew.
- [ ] Agree where everyone will shelter and who will call the stop.
- [ ] Look at loose sheeting, plastic, shade-net and light materials that need tying down before a storm.
- [ ] Check excavations and trenches for where storm water would run in.
- [ ] Make sure leads and the DB board are protected from rain and standing water.
- [ ] Point out the high, exposed places on this site where nobody may stay during a storm.

ASK THE CREW

- ? When should we stop work when a storm is coming?
- ? Where is the nearest proper shelter from where you are working today?
- ? What on this site could blow away or fill with water in a big storm?
- ? Has anyone been near a lightning strike? What did you notice?

PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR THIS JOB

Waterproof clothing for working in rain once the storm has passed · Protective equipment does not protect you from lightning: get to shelter

THE LAW

Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, section 8: General duties of employers to their employees; Construction Regulations, 2014, regulation 9: Risk assessment for construction work; General Safety Regulations, 1986, regulation 13I: Precaution against flooding. What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/lightning-and-storms/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Lightning and thunderstorms

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

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Keep this register in the site health and safety file. Log the talk in today's site diary with a photo of this page.