

### Inclement Weather

Many activities here at Northwestern take place outdoors, such as ceremonies, sporting events, landscaping, and maintenance activities. Our local climate has cold winters, warm summers, and frequent short fluctuations in temperature, precipitation, humidity, cloudiness, and wind direction. These characteristics have the potential to produce inclement weather, which is defined as conditions that are either unsafe or undesirable for outdoor activities. It's important that you understand the different sources of inclement weather and associated hazards so you can take the necessary precautions when it is predicted on campus.



- **Heavy rainfall** can cause flooding, building damage, decreased visibility, and slip, fall, and electrical hazards



- **Lightning** is attracted to the ground and poses potential life-threatening consequences for those outdoors



- **Heavy snow and ice storms** produce slip and fall hazards, poor visibility, and hazardous driving conditions



- **Excessive hot temperatures** can result in illnesses such as [heat exhaustion and heat stroke](#)



- **Excessive cold temperatures** can result in [frostbite and hypothermia](#)



- **Excessive wind speeds** can produce hazardous flying debris and can knock down trees and power lines, resulting in power losses and electrical hazards

#### Plan ahead

The best way to stay safe during inclement weather is to avoid it! Monitor local [forecasts](#) to obtain current weather information. If inclement weather is predicted, avoid outdoor activities if possible (e.g., rescheduling, relocating activities to indoor locations).

#### Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

**Preparation is Key:** Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review potential weather hazards in your workplace and discuss ways to avoid incidents.

**Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

**Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

#### Work safely

In some instances, you may be required to work outdoors. However, it's important that you never put yourself in danger and always have a plan to seek shelter in the event inclement weather arrives. Follow the tips below when working outdoors:

- ✓ If you are outdoors when inclement weather starts, see lightning, or hear thunder, seek shelter immediately, such as in a building or vehicle.
- ✓ Never use electrically-powered tools or equipment or perform electrical work in wet conditions to avoid shock hazards.
- ✓ Never work on a ladder or elevated surface (e.g., rooftop) in wet or windy conditions to avoid the risk of falling.
- ✓ Dress appropriately for the weather and work being performed, including any necessary [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE).

**Learn more:** Review Northwestern's natural disaster preparation [guidelines](#), and the Ready.gov Severe Weather Preparedness [website](#).

**Report all incidents** to your supervisor, who should then notify Northwestern's Office of Risk Management on their [website](#) or by phone at (847) 491-5582.

#### Safety at home

Keep you and your family safe at home during inclement weather by following these tips:

- ✓ Know how your community sends warning messages. Some communities have outdoor sirens while others depend on media and smart phones to alert residents.
- ✓ Have a family plan that includes an emergency meeting place and related information and practice the plan regularly.
- ✓ Keep trees and branches trimmed near your house. If you have time before severe weather arrives, secure loose objects and close windows and doors.

#### For Additional Information

Contact Environmental Health & Safety at [ehs@northwestern.edu](mailto:ehs@northwestern.edu)