California Schools JPA℠

SAFETY MATTERS

RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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SEVERE WEATHER SEASON SAFETY TIPS

OBJECTIVE To prepare staff members and your building in order to stay safe in heavy rain and flash flooding.

Annual large weather systems may bring heavy rain, snowfall, and high winds that may result in flooding, downed trees, and power outages. There is also a high risk for debris flows in areas in or near burn scars from the wildfires that have occurred in the last few years. Here are some tips to prepare you for heavy rain and flash flooding:

DRIVING IN RAIN

Wet pavement contributes to nearly 1.2 million accidents per year. Prepare your car in advance of a rainstorm by making sure windshield wipers are in good working condition. Tire treads should also be the proper depth to provide good traction on wet roadways.

In a rainstorm, be sure to:

- Turn on your headlights. Rain impedes visibility. By turning on your headlights, other drivers are more likely to see your car.
- Turn off your cruise control. When roadways are slick, cruise control impairs your ability to adjust speed quickly. You should be in full control of your car when the rain falls.

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- Slow down to avoid hydroplaning. At speeds as low as 35 miles per hour, tires can lose contact with the roadway during a rainstorm.
- If you begin to skid, avoid hard braking or turns, which can also contribute to hydroplaning. Try to remain calm and continue looking and driving in the direction you would like the car to go.

PREPARING YOUR BUILDING FOR RAIN

A little preparation goes a long way to take care of your facility during heavy rains. Here are some tips to keep your facility safe and dry:

- Get your roof and gutters inspected to ensure they are in good condition before the rain falls. Remove leaves or debris from gutters throughout the year.
- Check the inside of the building to be sure there are no signs of water leaks—mold, water rings, or paint discoloration. Make any necessary repairs.

- Check doors and windows to ensure they seal properly.
- Purchase hurricane socks, which can absorb a gallon of water at a time, for leak-prone areas.
- Prune dead branches from trees in your yard, which can fall on or around your building during a storm.
- Have sandbags on hand for low areas around the facility to keep water at bay during a flood.
- In a flood, move furniture to higher floors to prevent water damage.

STAYING SAFE DURING A FLASH FLOOD

Emergency preparedness is the best way to keep you and your family safe during a flood. The following tips will help you prepare for the worst:

- Listen to local weather stations during storms for possible flood warnings.
- If there is a flood in your area, get to higher ground and stay there until it's safe to return.
- Steer clear of flood water. As little as six inches of moving water can sweep you off your feet. Keep children away from flood water too.
- If approaching a flooded road by car, turn around. Cars can be swept away by less than two feet of moving water. If you cannot turn around and water is rising around you, get out of the car quickly and move to higher ground.
- Assemble an emergency supply of food, water, and other necessities. For a list of suggested supplies to have on hand during a flash flood, visit redcross.org.

WORKING IN THE RAIN

The potential hazards present on a worksite can be exacerbated during inclement conditions such as rain. Working in the rain can cause slippery surfaces and limited visibility. However, steps can be taken to mitigate such hazards.

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When working in the rain:

- Move cautiously. Although the weather may make you inclined to work more quickly to get out of the rain, this is dangerous. Because rain causes slick surfaces, work slowly and deliberately —particularly when climbing ladders.
- Use the correct equipment. Do not use electrical tools and equipment that are not specifically rated for outdoor use when working in the rain. Select hand tools with textured, nonslip grip handles.
- Wear proper footwear with a deep tread to prevent slipping. In the rain, be sure your pant leg lies over your boot or shoe. Tucking your pants into footwear can cause water to enter.
- Wear appropriate rain gear that includes both pants and a coat. Be sure the material is ventilated so it can be worn comfortably for extended periods. If it is cold, select wool or synthetic materials that insulate even when wet. Be certain clothing fits properly so it does not interfere with movement.
- Use proper hand protection that features a strong, slip-proof grip. Make sure gloves are adequately tight and long enough to allow your raincoat sleeve to prevent water from entering.
- Ensure adequate vision. If you wear glasses or goggles, use anti-fog spray or wipes on them before going outside. Wear a hood or hat to keep rain out of your eyes. Because a hood narrows your range of vision, be sure to look both ways when wearing one. When working at night, make sure lighting is adequate and the lights used are rated for outdoor use.
- Make sure you can be seen. Wear high-visibility clothing, especially in areas with vehicle traffic and heavy machinery. Do not wear rain gear or vests that have become dull or are no longer reflective.

RESOURCES

Precautionary/Preparedness

- **Emergency Alerts/Warnings & Evacuations Notices — CalAlerts.org**
- **Tracking Weather Conditions — National Weather Service**
- **Tracking Road Conditions — Caltrans QuickMap Travel Alert**
- **California Department of Education School Disaster & Emergency Management — Resources for LEAs**
- **California Department of Education — Floods**
- **Ready.gov**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — Floods**

Water Intrusion

Severe storms with heavy rain can find their way through roofs, windows, doors, joints, and foundations if not addressed quickly. The following resources are available to assist with preparation to eliminate or mitigate losses from water intrusion.

- **Safety Matters — Water Intrusion: Prevention, Interior and Exterior Inspection**
- **Safety & Loss Control Resources — Water Intrusion and Flood Control Plan (download)**

This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.