

Natural Disasters

The first steps in responding to a natural disaster should be specified in your facility's emergency action plan (EAP), as required by OSHA. The required contents of an EAP are outlined in the OSHA regulations at 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1910.38. The EAP will include other procedures that are relevant to your business operations. Review your EAP and become familiar with it. The most common natural disasters are tornadoes, floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and earthquakes.



When a tornado warning is issued, seek inside shelter in small interior rooms on the lowest floor without windows; hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows; or rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or blocks with no windows. Stay away from outside walls and windows. Hide under a heavy piece of furniture if it is available. Use your arms to protect your head and neck, and remain sheltered in place until the tornado threat is announced to be over.



If indoors during a flood, be ready to evacuate as directed by the emergency coordinator and/or the designated official. Follow the recommended primary or secondary evacuation routes. If you cannot evacuate, move to a higher floor or the roof. If outdoors, you should climb to high ground and stay there. Avoid walking or driving through floodwater. If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.



To prepare for wildfires, sign up for emergency alerts from your local government and listen to and follow the instructions from these authorities. If advised to do so, or if you feel you are in danger, evacuate quickly in accordance with your facility's evacuation plan. Bring a disaster supply kit with you that includes goggles and a respirator, such as an N95. Be aware of and avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, live embers, fallen power lines, and downed wires.



Once a hurricane warning has been issued, prepare to evacuate as directed by your emergency coordinator and/or the designated official. Leave areas that might be affected by a storm tide or stream flooding. During a hurricane, remain indoors and consider going to the small interior rooms on the lowest floor without windows; hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows; and rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or blocks with no windows.



During an earthquake, stay away from windows, heavy or tall equipment, shelves, or other objects that could break or fall. Keep away from overhead fixtures, windows, filing cabinets, and electrical power. Wait until the shaking stops to evacuate the building. Use stairs, not elevators. Evacuate as instructed by the emergency coordinator and/or the designated official. If you're outside during an earthquake, move into an empty area, and walk away from anything that could fall on you.