

news & notes

EXTREME WEATHER DRIVING

Whenever there is a chance of bad weather, prepare for it by checking the weather report before you hit the road.

- **Know the local radio channel for weather reporting.** If you hit bad weather when you are already on the road, tune in to a local weather report on the radio to find out what may be coming your way.
- **Keep abreast of your current location.** If you have a special weather radio, tune it into the local station, because these channels often have the most accurate information concerning current weather conditions. In some weather events, such as tornadoes, listening to the local weather report can help you avoid traveling into the danger zone. This might not be the case if you have no idea where the tornado is located. Most local stations have a good history of reporting locations to listeners so that those listeners can take precautionary action.
- **Seek shelter.** If you find yourself driving into a danger zone as reported by the local stations, seek shelter if told to do so.



The last words of the Wicked Witch of the East.

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

August 2012

Tornado training

Know how to protect yourself

If the weather service issues a tornado 'watch,' it means that a tornado is possible in the area, and you should make preparations. A tornado 'warning' means that a tornado is in the area and you should immediately take shelter.

Know what to do when a tornado is approaching.

If you are inside:

- Stay inside, close windows, and go to a designated shelter area such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar, or the lowest building level.
- If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (for example, a closet or hallway) away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls.
- Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
- Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible.
- If you are in a mobile home, get out immediately and go to a sturdy, nearby building.

If you are caught outside:

- Get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt, and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter.
- If your vehicle is hit by flying debris while you are driving, pull over and park. Stay in the car with the seat belt on, put your head down below the windows, and cover your head with your hands and a blanket, coat, or cushion if possible.
- If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway (for example, a trench, ditch, or ravine), leave your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.
- Don't seek shelter under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Never try to outrun a tornado in urban or congested areas in a car or truck. Instead, leave the vehicle immediately for safe shelter.
- Watch out for flying debris, which causes most fatalities and injuries.

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VOICE CONTROLS IN VEHICLES

In an effort to reduce distracted driving, automakers are enabling drivers to control their mobile phones, navigation systems, vehicle climate, etc., with their voice.

While voice controls may prevent drivers from looking away from traffic, their focus may still be on their gadgets. "Voice controls don't go far enough," says Attorney Robert Briskman (www.briskmanandbriskman.com). Distracted driving is really a matter of the driver's mental state. Multitasking while driving is what causes accidents.

Voice controls can be used to accomplish a variety of dashboard and communication tasks, but the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) says there is not enough research on whether voice controls help or hurt drivers' focus. In December 2011, the NTSB recommended banning all mobile devices in cars, except for emergency or navigation purposes.

HEARING HEALTH

The Better Hearing Institute (BHI) says that research links hearing loss to a threefold risk of falling among working people aged 40 to 69, depression and anxiety, cognitive decline, and reduced earnings. So the BHI is encouraging employers to include hearing health in workplace wellness programs. It is also urging workers to get their hearing checked and to be fitted with hearing aids to reduce the toll that unaddressed hearing loss can take on their lives.



When the emergency alarm sounds

Do you know how to exit?

Do you know how to escape in an emergency? Do you know where the exits are located? Are you certain the doors will be unlocked and that hallways will not be blocked? Knowing the answers can make the difference during an emergency.

OSHA describes an exit route as a continuous and unobstructed path of exit travel from any point within a workplace to a place of safety. An exit route is made up of three elements:

1. **Exit access**—The portion of the route that leads to an exit;
2. **Exit**—The portion that is generally separated from other areas to provide a protected way of travel; *and*
3. **Exit discharge**—The part that leads directly outside or to a street, walkway, refuge, etc.

Normally, workplaces are required to have at least two exit routes to permit prompt evacuation of employees and other occupants during an emergency. But more than two are required if the number of employees, size of the building, or arrangement of the workplace will not allow employees to evacuate safely.

One exit route is permitted if all employees can evacuate safely during an emergency, again based on number, building size, and workplace arrangement. Exit routes must be located as far as practical from one another in case one is blocked by fire or smoke.

Computer eyestrain

Keep your eyes healthy in the digital age

August is **Eye Injury Prevention Month**, a good time to look at the growing problem of computer eyestrain. Between work and home, more people are spending more time peering at computer screens than watching TV.

Here's how to set up your computer to minimize eyestrain:

- **Position the monitor 25" to 30" from your eyes**, which is about the distance of your fingertip when your arm is stretched out in front of you.
- **Set monitor height so that the top edge is even with your sight line.**
- **Set monitor screen resolution so that text is easy to read**—600 x 800 is standard.
- **Set monitor's brightness to low** and contrast to high.
- **Set monitor refresh rate to 75 hz or higher.**
- **Minimize glare** by making sure background light level is about the same as the screen light level. Minimize direct sunlight or bright lights in front of or behind the monitor. Attach a glare shield, if necessary.
- **Place a document holder at the same level as the monitor** to prevent repetitive eye movement from paper to screen.
- **Keep the screen clean.**