

Spring and Summer Weather Events: Get Ready

Now that the weather is getting warmer, you may be breathing a sigh of relief. After all, no more shoveling snow, slipping on ice, snow bomb cyclones, or single-digit temperatures! But warmer weather brings its own extremes: tornadoes, lightning and thunderstorms, hail, drought and wildfires, and triple-digit temperatures.

Each part of the country has its own warm-weather risks. So, prepare your property and your people accordingly for the risks that accompany spring and summer in your region.

Tornado Watch v. Tornado Warning

They may sound alike, but not only is there a difference, each has its own emergency protocol. A tornado watch is when the conditions are right for a funnel cloud to form. A tornado warning means a funnel cloud has already formed and been spotted.

If a tornado warning does occur during services or church event, prevent people from leaving and direct them to a shelter on church grounds until after the danger has passed. Choose a space (or multiple spaces) that can shelter the largest number of people likely to be present during any event. Select either a basement room or interior room without windows.

Create a plan and run practice drills so people know what to do ahead of time. Then modify your plan based on any issues identified during the drill. Keep practicing until you have a solid plan that works.

Lightning and Thunder

Too many people make the mistake of dismissing thunderstorms as harmless, but lightning can cause serious damage to both people and property. If you hear the rumbling of thunder, go indoors, and definitely don't stand under a tree. If lightning strikes a tree, the current could jump to people under its canopy, or a branch could fall and cause an injury.

Consider installing a lightning protection system to protect your property from damage from fire or shorted electrical equipment. These systems conduct lightning directly to the ground, so it doesn't travel through the building.

Downpours

It's one thing to pray for rain, but too much rain, or heavy rains, can cause flash flooding and even landslides. Have the lower levels of your buildings and the surrounding landscape properly inspected for potential problem areas that can be reinforced or repaired. If your facilities are located on a flood plain, consult with experts to determine if landscaping can lessen interior flooding by routing flowing water around buildings.

Hailstones

Hailstones can cause injury or property damage to vehicles and roofs and even break windows. Hail is often only pea-sized, but can grow as large as a softball. So, keep people indoors until it the storm stops or passes.

Drought and Wildfires

If you live in an area prone to drought, heed water conservation advice provided by local government. In severe drought conditions, you may need to let your lawn die and use allotted water to preserve trees.

Also, clear out any dry brush or dead plant matter near your buildings. Doing so will create a buffer around your facilities, or fire break, in case of wildfire.

Extreme Heat

When temperatures increase severely, so do the risks to vulnerable church members. Check in on your elderly parishioners and those without air conditioning to make sure they are staying cool and hydrated.

During outdoor activities, remind participants to take frequent breaks and drink water. If you have an air-conditioned space, consider hosting afternoon get-togethers so community members have a place to cool down.

We hope you have plenty of fun in the sun this spring and summer! But be prepared for the extreme weather events that could strike your region.