

High Wind Dangers

Learn how to prepare for high wind hazards on the jobsite.

High Wind Dangers

When you work outside, your safety is directly affected by the weather. Rain, snow, ice, and extreme heat are common hazards.

A less frequently discussed, but just as dangerous, weather-related hazard is high winds. It's important to learn the proper steps to take to stay safe while working in windy conditions.

What are high winds?

High wind is wind that occurs at a high enough velocity to cause one or more of the following hazards:

- The wind is strong enough to cause an employee to fall from an elevated location.
- The wind is strong enough to cause employees or equipment to lose control of any material they are handling.
- The wind could expose employees to additional hazards, even when following proper safety procedures for the task at hand.

OSHA (The Occupational Safety and Health Administration) generally considers high wind to be any wind exceeding 40 miles per hour.

However, in certain conditions, a wind of 30 miles per hour could be considered high wind, such as when the work being done involves a significant amount of [material handling](#).

High wind hazards

Not every construction jobsite will have the same concerns, but there are many common hazards created by high winds. These include:

- Strains and sprains due to wind forcefully pulling doors or materials from the operator's hands.
- [Struck-by incidents](#) due to objects being blown around.

- [Slips, falls, and trips](#) due to workers reacting to a falling object due to the wind blowing these items over
- Eye injuries due to small particles of flying debris and dust
- Dropped loads while completing lifts with wind present.
- [Objects falling](#) from elevated surfaces.
- [Dump truck tip-over](#)
- Unplanned movement of [overhead power lines](#)

If you come across any high wind hazards on your jobsite, you should always alert your coworkers as well as your supervisor as quickly as possible. Even if you are unsure of whether or not a potential issue is a hazard, it's always better to speak up to avoid accidents and injuries.

How to prepare for high winds

In order to keep yourself and other workers safe on the construction site during high winds, there are several steps you can take to prepare:

- Check weather reports and monitor conditions continuously. Do not schedule work at elevations on days when high winds are in the forecast.
- Wind can pick up quickly and sudden gusts can take you by surprise. Make sure you always wear a harness when working at heights over 1.5m and ensure you are connected to an anchor point at all times.
- Ensure partially built structures are properly secured and supported at all times, regardless of weather conditions. Ensure that walls are braced until the building is complete.
- Ensure scaffolding and other temporary structures are secure and cannot be blown over.

How to stay safe during high winds

While you're working in high winds, there are a few additional safety tips you should follow. If you have any questions about any of these tips, ask your supervisor for clarification:

- Never work on scaffoldings, roofs, or other elevations during strong winds.
- Ensure that tools are packed away safely and that roofing sheets, cones, signage, and other loose materials are safely secured. A high

wind can pick up a piece of scrap metal and carry it as far out as the height from which it came.

- Wear eye protection to keep dust, debris, and other foreign particles from blowing into the eyes.
- Ensure hard hats are securely fastened and cannot be blown off your head.
- Use extreme caution when picking up large sections of plywood or similar flat materials that can fly through the air.
- Tag lines should be used when hoisting loads with large flat surfaces.
- Do not operate hoisting equipment in high winds without approval from your supervisor.
- Cease all crane operations until wind speeds return to acceptable levels.

Working during high winds can be extremely difficult, and the potential for injuries is high. Always use extreme caution and if you feel like winds are too high to safely continue your task, bring it to your supervisor's attention. You should never put yourself or your fellow coworkers at risk.

High wind best practices

Take a few minutes to look over your work area and site for potential hazards due to high winds. Discuss with other workers what you think could be done to eliminate or reduce the potential for injury and [equipment damage](#).

Some of the best practices to eliminate hazards and injuries related to high winds include:

- Eliminate work tasks altogether that become dangerous in windy conditions.
- Park trucks and equipment where the wind is blowing against the opposite side that the operator enters and exits.
- Do not reach or react to dropping an object or losing a hardhat to the wind. This can be very dangerous, especially when you are on an elevated surface.
- Do not attempt to conduct lifting operations during high wind events. Make sure to ask your supervisor if they are monitoring high winds and ask when you should stop working.
- Never stand in [the line of fire](#). In high winds, the line of fire could be next to a lifted load, next to a truck dumping materials, or downwind from blowing dust.

- Consider wearing goggles if the [dust](#) and debris are too much for safety glasses.

On a construction site, it is critical that you plan your day and your tasks to ensure safety. You will find that weather can play a major role in what tasks you will be able to do that day.

When high winds are forecasted, plan work accordingly. Avoid certain tasks during high winds and use safeguards you have been taught to ensure your safety as well as the safety of your coworkers.