Storms can happen anywhere, at any time of the year. They are more common in NSW during the main storm season, from October to the end of April, but it is important to stay prepared all year round. Severe storms may cause major damage and pose a risk to life. They may be accompanied by torrential rain, strong winds, large hailstones and lightning and may cause flash flooding, unroof buildings and damage trees and power lines.

**Risk Factors**

- Danger from high winds where trees located on or around the workplace not regularly checked and trimmed
- Electrocuting from fallen wires
- Roofs in need of repair
- Excursion activities undertaken without risk assessment

**Prevention Strategies**

The following actions should always be undertaken to prepare for storms, but not when they are occurring:

- Ensure gutters and downpipes are cleaned regularly
- Ensure overhanging branches are trimmed
- Ensure roofs are in good repair
- Prepare an emergency kit consisting of at least a portable radio with spare batteries, a first aid kit and manual, waterproof bags, emergency contact numbers, waterproof footwear with non-slip soles, waterproof and puncture resistant gloves, cleaning products and boxes
- Prepare a storm plan covering actions needing to be undertaken

When undertaking activities outside the workplace be aware of storm risks (e.g. high winds) and ensure you identify an appropriate shelter nearby. Be aware of any storm warning before undertaking activities.

**Response**

When a storm warning is broadcast or you see a severe storm approach the following actions should be undertaken:

**Before the storm**

- Listen to the local radio station for information and advice
- Unplug electrical devices
- Direct students and staff to assemble indoors
- Stay well clear of windows
- Secure loose objects in open areas, eg. garbage bins
- Ensure the emergency kit is ready to use

**During the storm**

- Listen to the local radio station for further information and advice
- Direct students and staff to stay indoors and stay well clear of windows
- Avoid using fixed line telephones
- If driving, put on your hazard lights and pull over to the side of the road, clear of streams, trees and power lines
- If caught outdoors, seek shelter in a building or vehicle, but not under a tree. If unable to find shelter, crouch down, preferably in a hollow, with feet together and remove metal objects from head and body. Do not lie down but avoid being the highest object in the vicinity. If your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing from nearby rocks, fences etc. move away to a new position immediately
- Use the emergency kit, if required

**After the storm**

- Listen to the local radio station for further information and advice
- Check buildings for damage
- Instruct students and staff to stay well clear of creeks and drains, fallen trees and power lines and damaged structures
- Conduct a roll call at the first opportunity

Storms can happen anywhere, at any time of the year. They are more common in NSW during the main storm season, from October to the end of April, but it is important to stay prepared all year round. Severe storms may cause major damage and pose a risk to life. They may be accompanied by torrential rain, strong winds, large hailstones and lightning and may cause flash flooding, unroof buildings and damage trees and power lines.
Storm (including high wind)

Work Health and Safety Directorate

- Keep students and staff on premises until it is safe to return to normal activities or to go home. Beware that travel arrangements may be hindered by storm damage or flooding.

- Use the emergency kit, if required.

- If you need help, phone the SES on 132 500. For life-threatening emergencies phone 000 immediately.

Remember:

While the storm is passing through, stay indoors if possible. If you are driving, put on your hazard lights and pull over to the side of the road, clear of flood ways, streams, creeks, causeways, trees and power lines.

Recovery Actions

- Implement procedures to resume workplace activities, which include arranging counselling and support to those affected by the incident.

- Review the emergency management plan.

Further Information

- Emergency Management Australia

- Contact your local SES or NSW State Emergency Services