



Outdoor Work in High Winds

Environmental Health and Safety Guideline

EHS Policy Volume:

I

II

III

IV

Revision Number:

2

Effective Date:

04/14/2022

Approved By:

OEHS

Document Number:

OEHS-GS-OHW-2.0-22


DEP Office of Environmental, Health and Safety Compliance Authorization

I, a duly authorized representative of the DEP Office of Environmental, Health and Safety, have reviewed this document, have found it to be acceptable and authorize its use for all DEP operations.

Revision / Action

Signature

Revision 1 /Authorization On file Date: 9/16/2016

Revision 2 /Authorization  Date: 04/14/2022

History and Updates

Date/short description of an action/update

- 04/14/22 – Updated format, new sections on how to prepare for high winds and recommended safe practices during high winds.

1 PURPOSE

High winds could blow an employee from an elevated location, cause an employee or equipment handling material to lose control of the material, and cause an employee to other hazards (downed trees and power lines, flying debris, etc.). This document provides general guidance on working outdoors in high winds.

2 PROCEDURE

- 1) When winds exceed a level of 45 miles per hour (mph) sustained (1 hour or more), **Supervisors** or **Managers** should consider postponing, cancelling, or modifying non-critical field operations or other outdoor activities. In addition, personnel who work in temporary / unsecured structures should work with **Supervisors** to identify and move to a more secure work location where appropriate.
- 2) If sustained winds (> 1 hour) reach 60 mph, and DEP crews have not heard otherwise, DEP work crews should stand down and/or shelter in place until wind speeds diminish. Those who have received unique direction should follow those instructions. In addition, those who are conducting critical tasks should make every effort to contact supervisory staff to confirm the stand down.
- 3) Based on forecast conditions, the Agency may order a stand down/shelter in place at any point in time, even before sustained winds reach 60 mph.
- 4) When operating cranes, follow the crane-specific Wind Action Plan prepared in accordance with [1 RCNY §3319-01](#).
- 5) Communication and check-in/check-out protocols should be followed during extreme weather events, including high wind conditions.
- 6) If any other dangerous conditions exist in addition to wind, work can and should be modified by supervision to ensure DEP employees' safety.
- 7) As always, employees in the field should notify their **Supervisor** about any conditions that arise that may result in an unsafe work environment.

Prepare for High Winds

- 1) Know the National Weather Service terminology and monitor forecasts for National Weather Service wind warnings.
 - **High Wind** – A wind of such velocity that it could cause an employee to be blown from an elevated location, an employee or equipment handling material could lose control of the material, or an employee could be exposed to other hazards not controlled by the standard involved. Winds exceeding 40 miles per hour, or 30 miles per hour when work involves material handling, are considered to meet these criteria, unless the employer takes precautions to protect employees from the hazardous effects of the wind.
 - **High Wind Warning** – a weather warning issued by the National Weather Service when high wind speeds may pose a hazard or are life threatening.

- **Wind Watch** – a weather warning issued by the National Weather Service when sustained winds are 25 to 39 mph and/or gusts to 57 mph.
- 2) Safeguard cranes and derricks in accordance with the weather forecast and Wind Action Plans.
- 3) Check the outdoor work area for unsecured objects or potentially dangerous conditions.
- 4) Bring inside loose, lightweight objects
- 5) Secure materials and equipment that will remain outside.

During High Winds

- 1) Remain indoors and postpone outdoor work if possible. When caught outdoors, take cover next to a building or under a shelter.
- 2) Stand clear of roadways or train tracks, as a gust may blow you into the path of an oncoming vehicle.
- 3) Use handrails where available on outdoor walkways and avoid other elevated areas such as roofs without adequate railing.
- 4) Watch for flying debris. Tree limbs may break, and street signs may become loose during strong wind gusts. Keep an eye toward nearby balconies for loose objects that may fall.
- 5) In the event of a downed power line:
 - a) Do not try to free lines or to remove debris yourself.
 - b) Avoid anything that may be touching downed lines, including vehicles, tree branches, or wet areas of ground.
 - c) If you see someone who has been shocked who may be in direct or indirect contact with a power line, do not try to touch them. You may become a second victim. Get medical attention as quickly as possible by calling 911.
 - d) If a line falls on your car, stay inside the vehicle. Take care not to touch any of the metal frame of your vehicle. Honk your horn, roll down the window and warn anyone who may approach of the danger. Ask someone to call the police. Do not exit the car until help arrives unless it catches on fire. To exit, open the door, but do not step out. Jump, without touching any of the metal portions of the car's exterior, to safe ground and get quickly away.
- 6) If you are driving:
 - a) Keep both hands on the wheel and slow down.
 - b) Watch for objects blowing across the roadway and into your path.
 - c) Keep a safe distance from cars in adjacent lanes as strong gusts could push a car outside its lane of travel.

- d) Take extra care in a high-profile vehicle such as a truck, van, SUV, or when towing a trailer, as these are more prone to be pushed or even flipped by high wind gusts.
- e) If winds are severe enough to prevent safe driving, get onto the shoulder of the road and stop, making sure you are away from trees or other tall.

Information on wind speeds in local work areas is available at several locations. During weather emergencies, general data on wind speed and advisories may be disseminated via the DEP Emergency Call Centers, EHS Directors and/or directly through operations communication channels.

Employees are urged to be aware of the surrounding environment and report circumstances of flying debris, falling limbs, branches, and trees to their *Supervisor* so that proper job assignments can be made.