

# Safety Talk

JUNE 2025



## BUILDING INSPECTIONS AFTER SEVERE WEATHER

Tennessee has experienced increasingly unpredictable weather patterns over the past few years, ranging from extreme cold, severe thunderstorms, tornados, earthquakes, and catastrophic flooding. The need to recognize and control damage caused by storms is paramount and begins with a post-storm inspection as soon as possible following an extreme weather event.

A post-storm inspection will include a complete evaluation of a property's integrity that may have been affected by the weather. Therefore, it will consist of inspections of the roof, attic, ceilings, walls, basement, footers, drainage systems, parking lots and grounds. Depending on their size and construction, buildings and properties are at varying degrees of risk from storms. Regular inspection of buildings and outdoor facilities is crucial to minimizing the likelihood and extent of damage.

### What should you consider after a storm?

After a storm, you should inspect the building as soon as the location is safe. Always enter buildings with a high degree of risk awareness and caution after a weather event. Protect yourself by wearing PPE such as hard hats, safety glasses, gloves and sturdy footwear to protect against things shifting or falling. Paying attention to the following points:

**Exterior building damage:** Visually inspect the building for damage (especially the components subject to heavy loads, e.g. roof, windows, doors, supporting structure, lifting systems, drains, retention basins, etc.). Have severely damaged buildings checked by suitable experts before entering because the structure may not be safe in some extreme conditions.

**Roof:** Visually inspect the roof for damage. Check for loose components such as shingles, sheet metal, or damaged rubber membranes. Look for large limbs or other debris that have fallen or been blown onto the roof as these could cause damage. Check the floor immediately beneath the roof for signs of damage such as water penetration and obvious structural damage to rafters or trusses. If there is structural damage be mindful of the potential for fall or collapse. You should only enter the fall area with extreme caution or preferably not at all. Secure the danger areas and have your contractor assess the damage.

**The Facade / Soffit:** Damaged facades and soffits can allow wind and moisture to penetrate the interior of a building. This can result in water damage from rain or frozen pipes and over time it can damage the structure and masonry walls. Inspect the entire facade and soffit for damage and have it repaired promptly.

**Windows and doors:** Windows and doors are particularly susceptible to moisture damage. Check window panes, exterior doors and basement stairs for moisture. Check the sills and gaskets to ensure they are in good condition and working properly.

**Basement / Garages:** Pay attention to water ingress via ceilings, shafts, pipes and ramps or the correct functioning of lifting systems (power supply).

(ARTICLE CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

## ROCK QUARRY SAFETY

Quarrying operations involve the extraction of raw materials, which can yield valuable minerals and construction materials vital to numerous industries. Despite the benefits that quarries provide, they can also pose serious hazards, putting the lives of workers at risk. This article will describe some of the specific hazards and safety protocols.

### Site Inspections:

- Ensure that you have trained employees on how to identify and avoid unstable rock and ground conditions.
- Supervisors should be performing daily site inspections to determine the condition of high walls, roadways and berms.
- When inspecting roadways, look for ruts in the road. If extreme, fill them in to ensure a smoother haul for equipment. If you notice large rocks or debris in the roads, that might indicate an issue with the high wall.
- Berms should be stable and solid to protect equipment and to protect the roadway.
- If there is evidence of toppling or sliding, install cones and caution tape in those areas to warn workers.

### General Site Safety:

- When working on the top of a wall, stay at least 6 feet from the edge. You can install berms 6 feet from the edge as a reminder and to serve as a form of fall protection.
- There is always the potential for falling debris, workers must wear proper protective equipment such as hard hats and safety glasses.
- It is crucial to establish exclusion zones and proper signage around potentially hazardous areas.
- Many quarry sites contain bodies of water, such as open pits or natural lakes. These can pose significant risks, such as drowning. Barriers and life-saving equipment such as life jackets and rescue ropes should be available on site.
- Employees should be provided with hearing protection and trained on how to properly use them.
- Quarry operations often create significant amounts of dust, which can cause respiratory issues for workers. It is crucial to implement dust suppression techniques and provide workers with respirators as needed.

### Heavy Equipment/Power Haulage Safety:

- Provide heavy equipment operators with good communication devices. They need to be able to communicate with other operators and workers on foot.
- Train employees to never approach heavy equipment unless they have radio communication with the operator or they have made eye contact with the operator and he has signaled to the worker on foot that it's ok to approach.
- Heavy equipment should be equipped with back up alarms, cameras and collision warning devices.
- When hauling material, use low gear when descending and ascending slopes or ramps.
- Train employees to never walk under suspended loads.
- Haul truck operators should stay inside the truck while it's loaded.

**Rain drains/retention basin:** Inspect rain gutters, and drainage systems on the building to prevent water damage. Check the retention basin and inspect the storm drain system for obstructions.

**Electrical system:** Check all electrical weather heads to ensure that they are intact and secure. Inspect the main electrical panels to see if any water is present or if any circuit breakers have tripped. If some safety devices have tripped, investigate the cause and consult an electrician to ensure that they can be safely reenergized.

**Electrical appliances:** If appliances have been or are in contact with water, do not enter this area and switch off the power supply immediately. Only operate electrical appliances if they have not been in contact with moisture. If some appliances or machines have come into contact with water, consult an electrician beforehand to ensure that they can be safely put back into operation.

**Grounds:** Inspect trees for wind damage and lightning strikes. Block off the area around trees that have broken limbs, excessive leaning, or are uprooted, until they can be safely removed.

**Damage documentation:** Take sufficient photographs of the damage and also make notes of important details. This information is vital for asserting your insurance claims.

**Preventive Action to reduce the risk of storm damage?**

**EMERGENCY PLANS:** Develop and implement emergency action plans for storm related activity. Identify safe places within the building where employees will gather for protection. Safe places include basements, interior rooms or hallways, preferably on the lowest floor of the building with no windows, and bathrooms. Train employees and conduct drills quarterly to ensure everybody knows the procedure. Make sure emergency kits are fully supplied and accessible.

**Building Inspections:** Regular inspections are important to maintaining a building properly. These inspections can assist maintenance with general upkeep as well as addressing small issues before they can become larger problems. Instruct the staff or building occupants to report any signs of damage such as water leaks, electrical issues, cracks or any damage to Maintenance immediately. Prior to a storm remove or secure loose and light objects (e.g. garden chairs, sunshades, posters, flags, awnings, etc.) and firmly close windows, doors, and skylights. Park county vehicles under roofs or in areas where overhead hazards are not present. If heavy rain is predicted move vehicles to high ground away from areas prone to flooding. Trees should be checked for dead spots or broken branches at least once a year (during the leafy season). If in doubt, call in a specialist to assess the trees on your property.

**Damage / Claims Reporting:** Report any damage to buildings, structures, grounds or vehicles immediately using our on-line reporting system located at [ASC\\_newclaims@us.davies-group.com](mailto:ASC_newclaims@us.davies-group.com) or email P&C Supervisor Donna McEarl at [Donna.Mcearl@us.davies-group.com](mailto:Donna.Mcearl@us.davies-group.com) or call her at 615-626-4531. If water damage occurred, please contact Jason Wix with ServPro at 615-633-7209 or [jasonwix@servproteam.com](mailto:jasonwix@servproteam.com).

Silica exposure poses a significant health risk to workers in various industries, with road construction and rock quarries standing out as high-risk environments. Silica is a common mineral found in materials like sand, concrete, and stone. These minerals can become dangerous airborne dust when they are cut, crushed, or drilled. Listed below are measures that can be used to protect workers.

### **What are the Health Hazards of Silica?**

Silicosis is a lung disease caused by breathing in very small particles of silica that cause inflammation and scarring in the lungs and reduces the lungs' ability to use oxygen.

Breathing in silica also increases the risk of lung cancer and other diseases, such as tuberculosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney and autoimmune diseases.

### **Engineering Controls:**

Implementing engineering controls is crucial to minimizing silica exposure. This includes using water sprays to control dust during cutting or drilling activities and installing local exhaust ventilation systems on heavy machinery to capture and contain silica dust at the source. For specific engineering controls for equipment/tasks, refer to OSHA's 1926.1153 standard.

Employers who do not fully implement the control methods listed in the 1926.1153 standard must:

- Determine the amount of silica that workers are exposed to if it is, or may reasonably be expected to be, at or above the action level of 25 micrograms of silica per cubic meter of air (averaged over an 8-hour day).
- Protect workers from respirable crystalline silica exposures above the Permissible Exposure Limit of 50 micrograms of silica per cubic meter of air (averaged over an 8-hour day).
- Use dust controls and safer work methods to protect workers from silica exposure above the PEL.
- Provide respirators to workers when dust controls and safer work methods cannot limit exposures to the PEL.

### **What Else Does the Standard Require?**

- Establish and implement a written exposure control plan that identifies tasks that involve exposure and methods used to protect workers, including procedures to restrict access to work areas where high exposures may occur.
- Designate a competent person to implement the written exposure control plan.
- Restrict housekeeping practices that expose workers to silica, such as the use of compressed air without a ventilation system to capture the dust and dry sweeping.
- Offer medical exams, including chest X-rays and lung function tests every 3 years for workers who are required by the standard to wear a respirator for 30 or more days per year.
- Train workers on the health effects of silica exposure, workplace tasks that can expose them to silica, and ways to limit exposures.
- Keep records of workers' silica exposure and medical exams.

## **JUNE 2025 QUIZ**

### **TRUE or FALSE**

1. Inspect your building immediately after a weather event even if it is unsafe to do so.  
**True or False**
2. Regular building inspections are important because small problems can be observed and addressed before they become bigger issues.  
**True or False**
3. Implementing engineering controls is crucial to minimizing silica exposure.  
**True or False**
4. Supervisors should perform daily inspections to determine the condition of high walls, roadways and berms.  
**True or False**
5. OSHA's action level for silica is 35 micrograms of silica per cubic meter of air.  
**True or False**

### **Answers**

1. False 2. True 3. True 4. True 5. False