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Wind & water: A challenging combination on construction sites

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When the weather forecasters started announcing an impending blizzard this year, many of us headed to the grocery store for comfort food and bottled water or the hardware store for batteries, shovels, and salt. Then we sat back and enjoyed the change of pace.

But for those in charge of construction sites, preparation was much more intense - and this intense preparation comes into play every time high winds and wet weather are predicted.

Organization is the key to success on all construction sites, and never is it more critical than when we are facing inclement weather.

Our superintendents must:

- * Secure everything on all levels under construction that could blow away or damage property or threaten pedestrians. This includes roof insulation, plywood, and other lightweight building materials. If the site has a tower crane, be sure to unlock it so it can swing with the wind - lessening the chance that it could topple over.
- * Cover excavated areas and sand for masonry with heat blankets and be sure to secure them against blowing.
- * Move onsite materials away from the construction egress road to allow equipment (loaders, plows, trucks, etc.) unimpeded access. Identify "snow drop areas" where snow can be removed to by front-end loader and ensure that they can remain under snow for a longer time than the rest of the site.
- * Consolidate and organize materials so snow can be easily cleaned from the site around them. Be sure to put what you need in the immediate-term on top for easy access.
- * Prepare to continually clear snow safely off a roof under construction.
- * If using a snow blower, check that you have adequate gasoline on-hand.
- * Modify your construction schedule to postpone activities that become increasingly dangerous in windy, wet conditions - activities such as steel erection, and working on metal decking or staging.

An ounce of prevention is worth much more than a pound of cure on a construction site in inclement weather.

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