

WEEKLY SAFETY TIP – 4/18/11 – LOWE’S STAFF SAVE CUSTOMERS

This past weekend, hundreds of tornadoes touched down in a period of three days across the US from Oklahoma to Virginia and the Carolinas. As of this morning, 48 fatalities have been reported, with many more people injured and many homes destroyed. The news has been full of the pictures of destruction.

We noticed one news story that called a North Carolina Lowe’s store manager a hero. As the tornado approached, there were more than 100 employees and customers were in the store. But this was not a tragic story. To quote the article, “They all made it out alive Saturday, thanks to quick action by Lowe’s store manager Michael Hollowell and his employees, who carried out an emergency response plan they had learned. They herded everyone to the windowless rear area of the store, away from the direct hit out front.” The tornado passed by, tearing the steel roof off the building. But none of the people in the safe area were seriously hurt. Here’s a link to the full article.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20110418/ap_on_re_us/us_severe_storms_hero_manager

They carried out an emergency response plan they had learned. OSHA directs us to have emergency response plans for most emergencies in 29 CFR 1910.38, linked here:

http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9726

If you look at the regulation, you will notice that for most companies, the plan is to be in writing. However, compliance with this regulation means more than just a written plan on a shelf that might help to keep you out of trouble with OSHA. The true purpose of the plan is for you and your employees *learn the plan*. What’s the best way to learn it? Read it. Discuss it, and then practice it. Drill on the emergency actions that will save lives. People learn and imprint what to do in their memory by reading, saying and then actually doing what you want them to learn.

Tornadoes, earthquakes, fires, floods, chemical releases, explosions, violent acts of terrorism – these are just a few things that you may need to plan for. But planning and preparation will save your life. Just ask Michael Hollowell. He knows this first hand.