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The Danger of High Winds on a Construction Site

Weather plays a huge role in our ability to work safely when working outdoors. While rain, snow, ice, and hot temperatures are often discussed, less focus is given to the hazards wind can create for workers. It is important to realize the different hazards high winds can pose and what can be done to work safely in these conditions.

Hazards Created by the Wind:

The exact scope of work will determine what hazards high winds can create on a worksite. Some hazards created by high winds that are universal for many construction jobs are:

- Strains/ sprains due to wind forcefully pulling doors from operators' hands.
- Struck-by incidents due to objects being blown around.
- Slips, trips, and falls due to workers reacting to a falling hard hat or object due to wind blowing these items from them.
- Eye injuries due to small particles of flying debris and dust.
- Dropped loads while completing lifts with wind present.
- Objects falling from elevated surfaces.
- Dump truck tip-over.

Best Practices to Eliminate Hazards and Injuries Related to High Winds:

- Eliminate work tasks altogether that become dangerous in excessively windy conditions.
- Park trucks and equipment where the wind is blowing against the opposite side that the operator exits and enters.
- Do not reach or react to dropping an object or losing a hard hat to the wind. This can be very dangerous, especially when you are on an elevated surface.
- Do not attempt to conduct lifting operations during high wind events. Many companies will use an anemometer to monitor wind speeds and have a certain wind speed that constitutes a stoppage of lifting activities.

- Never stand in the line of fire- whether that is below a lifted load, next to a truck dumping material, or downwind from blowing dust.
- Wear at minimum safety glasses, but also consider going with a goggle if conditions warrant their use.

Summary:

Preplanning of tasks is critical to ensure a solid start to working safely on a construction site.

Weather is a major factor in what tasks can or cannot be done on a particular day.

When high winds are going to be present, plan work accordingly.

Avoid certain tasks during high wind events, as well as implement extra safeguards to ensure safety during normal job tasks.