



Natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, and severe storms, are a common occurrence in Georgia. The aftereffects create risks for the employees assigned to the cleanup and recovery to which they might not typically be accustomed. That is why having a clear plan of action is extremely important before anyone is put in the path of danger. This month's Safety Alert shares with you items to look out for as well as a list of questions a supervisor should ask before the work begins.

Safety Meeting Topic: Storm Cleanup Safety on the Farm

Severe storms are common in Georgia and can leave behind damaged buildings, equipment, fencing, crops, and power lines. Cleanup work is necessary, but it's also one of the most dangerous times on the farm. Today's goal is to recognize the hazards and make sure everyone goes home safely.

1. Electrical Hazards

After a storm, power lines, electrical fencing, pumps, and service lines may be damaged. Wet ground and metal equipment make electrocution more likely.

- Treat **all downed power lines as live**.
- Stay at least **30 feet away** from downed lines.
- Do not touch electrical equipment in standing water.
- Report damaged lines immediately.

2. Flooding and Mud

Floodwater can contain animal waste, fuel, chemicals, and sharp debris. Muddy ground also increases slip and equipment rollover risks.

- Avoid floodwater whenever possible.
- Wear waterproof boots and gloves.
- Watch footing when walking and operating equipment.
- Clean and cover all cuts immediately.

3. Heat Stress and Fatigue

Storm cleanup is hard work, and Georgia heat and humidity make it even more dangerous.

- Drink water often—don't wait until you're thirsty.
- Take regular breaks in shade or cool areas.
- Watch for signs of heat illness: dizziness, confusion, nausea, heavy sweating.
- Speak up if you or a coworker isn't feeling well.

4. Equipment and Chainsaw Safety

Tractors, loaders, skid steers, and chainsaws are commonly used during cleanup and cause many serious injuries.

- Only trained workers should operate equipment and chainsaws.
- Inspect equipment before use.
- Shut down and lock out equipment before repairs.
- Never work alone with chainsaws or heavy machinery.

5. Damaged Structures

Barns, poultry houses, silos, and greenhouses may be unstable after high winds.

- Do not enter damaged buildings until they are checked for stability.
- Watch for falling debris, loose roofing, and sharp metal.
- Wear hard hats, gloves, eye protection, and sturdy boots.

6. Livestock, Wildlife, and Insects

Storms stress animals and displace snakes, rodents, and insects.

- Approach livestock carefully—stressed animals can act unpredictably.
- Watch where you step and reach, especially in debris and tall grass.
- Seek medical attention for bites, stings, or allergic reactions.

7. Chemical and Fuel Hazards

Storms can damage fuel tanks, chemical containers, and fertilizer storage.

- Do not handle spills unless you are trained and equipped.
- Ventilate enclosed areas before entering.
- Report spills and leaks immediately.

OSHA Storm Cleanup Safety Checklist (Review Together)

Before Starting Work

- Walk the area and identify hazards
- Locate downed power lines and utilities
- Review emergency procedures

PPE Required

- Hard hat
- Safety glasses
- Work gloves

- Steel-toe boots
- Long sleeves and pants
- Respiratory protection if needed

During Cleanup

- Use only equipment you are trained to operate
- Keep safe distances between workers and machines
- Take water and rest breaks
- Report unsafe conditions immediately

Closing Message

Storm cleanup is important, but **no task is worth an injury or a life**. Take your time, use the right equipment, watch out for each other, and speak up if something doesn't look safe.

Below are **supervisor-led discussion questions** designed to be used **at the end of the safety meeting**. They are practical, easy to ask, and encourage worker participation without putting anyone on the spot.

Supervisor Discussion Questions: Storm Cleanup Safety

1. Site-Specific Hazards

- What storm damage did we identify on this farm or work area today?
- Are there any downed power lines, damaged buildings, or flooded areas we need to avoid?
- What hazards might be hidden by mud, debris, or standing water?

2. Equipment and Task Assignments

- Who is trained and authorized to operate tractors, loaders, or chainsaws today?
- Does everyone understand their assigned task and the safest way to do it?
- Is anyone being asked to do a task they are not trained or comfortable doing?

3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Does everyone have the PPE needed for today's cleanup work?
- Are there any PPE issues that need to be corrected before we start?
- Do we need additional protection for dust, mold, or chemicals?

4. Heat Stress and Worker Health

- What is the plan for water breaks and rest periods today?
- How will we monitor workers for heat stress or fatigue?
- Who should workers notify if they feel overheated or unwell?

5. Emergency Preparedness

- If someone is injured, who do we contact first?
- Where is the nearest first aid kit and medical facility?
- How will we communicate if cell service is down?

6. Livestock, Wildlife, and Environmental Concerns

- Are there livestock or wildlife hazards in the cleanup area?
- What precautions are we taking to prevent bites, stings, or animal-related injuries?
- Are there chemical, fuel, or fertilizer spills we need to address safely?

7. Stop-Work Authority

- Does everyone understand they have the right to stop work if something becomes unsafe?
- Who should be notified immediately if conditions change?

Supervisor Closing Prompt

“Before we start, does anyone see a hazard we haven’t talked about, or have a concern about today’s cleanup work?”

The first 2 people that email our office (info@agritrust.biz) and confirm reading of this article will win a \$20 gift card.

Encouraging this discussion helps identify hazards early and reinforces a culture where safety comes first, especially during high-risk storm recovery operations.