



Policy Source: Gwinnett Tech	Owner: Chief of Police	Effective: 1999
Division: Administrative Services	Reviewed: 4/2024, 2/2026 Revised:4/2024	

7.3.15 GT Natural Disasters Response

1. TORNADO, WINDS, THUNDERSTORM

Severe weather watches and warnings come from the National Weather Service. Monitor local television and radio stations for the most current conditions. The County Emergency Management Agency will activate the severe weather siren system should conditions warrant.

Preparedness planning is an individual’s responsibility. To protect yourself and your family, you should have a safety plan in action now, before danger hits. The National Weather Service advises that a severe weather preparedness plan should include:

- A thorough knowledge of the hazard and the proper safety rules to be followed.
- Selection and designation of the best shelter you have.
- A battery operated flashlight, radio and cell phone should be kept handy.
- Instructions in the proper procedures to follow when a watch or warning is issued-or if threatening weather should develop with no advance warning.

Drills should be done to test and practice the plan. Included in the plan should be considerations and assistance to individuals with special needs.

1.1 Severe Weather Watches

A watch is announced when the National Weather Service has determined that conditions are favorable for the formation of severe weather. You should stay tuned to local radio and or television stations to be updated on current conditions.

1.2 Severe Weather Warnings

A warning is issued when severe weather has been sighted. You should take shelter immediately to protect yourself from high winds, flying or falling debris, lightning and heavy amounts of rain and sometimes hail.

1.3 Thunderstorms

Typically, thunderstorms may include high winds, rain, hail and lightning. The most

dangerous aspect of thunderstorms is lightning.

1.4 Tornadoes

If the National Weather Service issues a tornado warning the following guidelines should be followed:

- If indoors such as a classroom, or elsewhere on campus, report to a predetermined tornado shelter area of the building. If that area is not known or designated seek refuge in a doorway, interior hallway, under a desk or table, on the lowest level of the building. Stay away from windows and exterior doors.
- If outdoors and unable to get to shelter, seek cover in a ditch or depression in the ground and lie flat face down on the ground. Avoid being near utility poles and lines as they may be energized.
- If in an automobile, stop as quickly as safety permits. Exit the vehicle and seek shelter in a ditch or depression in the ground and lie flat face down on the ground. Avoid being near utility poles and lines as they maybe be energized.
- Remain in the safe area until the warning has passed or conditions permit.
- When exiting a building or shelter area, be aware of the possibility of downed power lines and other hazardous conditions such as structural damage to buildings.

Notify 911 or College Police 678-226-7377 or 911 if there are injuries or damage associated with the weather event.

Let first responders know if someone in your group cannot be accounted for.

2. WINTER WEATHER

Severe weather warnings are issued by the National Weather Service. When threat of severe weather exists, emergency services should monitor radio, television, weather monitor, Emergency Broadcast System, etc. The major dangers of winter storms are intense cold, poor visibility, slippery conditions, power/utility failures and breakdown/stalled transportation. Normal climatic conditions have not encouraged most Georgians to be overly concerned about severe weather conditions in overall acquisition of emergency equipment and design of roadways and buildings. A light snow or ice storm may incapacitate an area, disrupting utilities and making transportation extremely difficult.

3. FLOODS, DAM FAILURE

Floods are our nation's most common natural disaster, resulting in more deaths than any other type of severe weather.

Flood watch – flooding is possible

Flood warning – flooding is occurring or will occur soon. If advised by official to evacuate do so immediately.

Flash flood warning- unexpected flooding is imminent. Seek higher ground immediately. There are two key elements which contribute to flash floods:

- Rainfall intensity or the rate of rainfall
- Duration or the length of time that it has been raining

Most flash flooding occurs when thunderstorms stay in a region for a period of time or when there are heavy rains resulting from hurricanes or tropical storms.

Broadcasts will be made via weather radios, television and emails whenever our area is prone to flood. In the event of flooding in the College service area please follow the guidelines listed below:

- Contact **911** should you become trapped in flood waters.
- Move to higher ground (if you are in low lying areas) to arrive no later than the projected flood arrival.
- Reasonable actions within the projected time frame should be taken, but do not endanger your life by attempting to save furniture, etc. that could keep you in the potential flood area past projected flood arrival.
- Keep valuable papers at home in an easy carry case so you can grab as you evacuate.
- Follow directions from campusPolice, your Gwinnett Tech staff and local government authorities.
- Prepare to render volunteer aid to evacuees coming to the College seeking higher ground.

After flood waters recede:

Boil or chlorinate all drinking water. Do not use contaminated food. Destroy fresh or frozen foods that have come into contact with flood waters.

- Dispose of animal carcasses promptly or report them to authorities.
- Clean buildings as soon as flood waters recede. Remove stuck doors. Clean and dry residence areas before trying to live in them. In entering buildings, use flashlights, not matches: do not turn on electric lights, furnaces, or fixtures until tested by an electrician or other competent person. Remove sediment from heater, flues, and machines before trying to use them.
- Drain or pump water from basements. Get stoves or heating plant to work as soon as possible to hasten drying.
- Take all furniture and rugs outdoors and spread to dry and air.
- Clean bedding and clothing as soon as possible.
- Delay permanent repairs until buildings are thoroughly dry.
- Use insecticides where needed. Kill rodents.
- Avoid overexertion and strain in lifting and moving heavy objects.
- Have the gas and electricity turned on only after service technicians have checked for malfunctions.

4. WILDFIRES

If you see a fire nearby or approaching, call 911 to report the fire. Do not assume that someone else has reported it. If the danger is significant, local authorities may issue an evacuation notice to alert staff and students that a fire is nearby and it is important to leave the area.

Wildfires can occur at any time throughout the year, but the potential is always higher during

periods with little or no rainfall, which make brush, grass, and trees dry and burn more easily. High winds can also contribute to spreading the fire.

When a wildfire threatens your area, the best action to protect yourself and your family is to evacuate early to avoid being trapped. If there is smoke, drive carefully because visibility may be reduced. Keep your headlights on and watch for other vehicles and fleeing wildlife. If the danger is imminent, local EMA's may issue an evacuation notice to alert people that a fire is nearby and it is important to leave the area. Evacuation orders vary and may range from voluntary to mandatory. When authorities issue a mandatory evacuation notice, leave the area immediately.

5. LIGHTNING

Every thunderstorm contains the possibility of lightning. You do not have to be standing under a cloud to be struck.

- If you are outdoors and cannot seek shelter in building or house lay flat on the ground
- Stay away from open water, metal vehicles such as golf carts bicycles, motorcycles, metal lawn furniture and metal sheds
- Do not stand underneath tall isolated trees or poles
- Avoid hilltops and open areas
- Stay away from wire fences, clotheslines, metal pipes and railings.

6. DROUGHT

Gwinnett or Fulton County EMA can issue drought warnings from local water authority or utility district for information specific to Gwinnett Tech. These recommendations may include such procedures as watering lawns and outdoor water use on odd or even days of the week, at night, or on weekends. The restrictions may limit hours or prohibit use of water, or require use of hand watering instead of using sprinkler systems that use much more water.

A drought is a period of abnormally dry weather that persists long enough to produce a serious hydrologic imbalance, causing, for example, crop damage and shortages in the water supply. The severity of a drought depends on the degree of moisture deficiency, the duration, and the size of the affected area. Drought can be defined four ways:

- Meteorological Drought—when an area gets less precipitation than normal. Due to climatic differences, what is considered a drought in one location may not be a drought in another location.
- Agricultural Drought—when the amount of moisture in the soil no longer meets the needs of a particular crop.
- Hydrological Drought—when the surface and subsurface water supplies are below normal.
- Socioeconomic drought —when water supply is unable to meet human and environmental needs can upset the balance between supply and demand.

Gwinnett Tech will reduce consumption by encouraging voluntary conservation and to create public awareness of depleted storage levels and anticipated adverse

developments. At this point it is important to raise the consciousness level of the college water users.

7. HURRICANE

The National Weather Service ranks the size and intensity according to the Saffir-Simpson scale:

- Category One – winds of 74-95 mph, minimal damage
- Category Two – winds of 96-110 mph, moderate damage
- Category Three – winds of 111-130 mph, extensive damage
- Category Four – winds of 131-155 mph, extreme damage
- Category Five – winds over 155 mph, catastrophic

Hurricane Season	May 15-November 30
Hurricane Watch	The first notification by the National Weather Service that a hurricane is a definite threat to a geographic region of the United States. Landfall is uncertain and broad geographic areas are alerted. It is normally given 36 hours before the storm is expected to strike.
Hurricane Warning	Notification by the National Weather Service, normally 24 hours before the storm is expected to strike; more accurate landfall is predicted, with narrower geographic boundaries.
Hurricane Alert	Notification by the National Weather Service issued when Hurricane Force winds are imminent.
Hurricane Shelters	Areas of refuge to be used in the event of a hurricane should be a substantial building with limited glass.

Campus buildings may be used as shelters during hurricanes, tornadoes or other high winds

7.1 Hurricane Preparedness

Gwinnett Tech has established emergency plans including an overall Emergency Management Plan (EMP) for building evacuation and shelter-in place, and other area specific plans to prepare for and respond to emergencies. This Hurricane Preparedness Plan has been developed to work in conjunction with the EMP with specific procedures that are necessary when the National Weather Service has declared a Hurricane Watch.

7.2 Suspension of Services

All instructions such as canceling classes, closing of buildings, releasing of employees, special instructions and the relocation of students will be done via email, on the Gwinnett Tech Website, with notifications to local media and, if necessary, through automated systems that call your cell phones.

7.3 Seventy-two (72) hours before Hurricane Landfall

- College Emergency Group may be activated to review current conditions and discuss general plans and readiness.
- Review Hurricane Preparedness Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, and Emergency Procedures Plan as needed.
- Begin frequent monitoring of weather related media sources including but not limited to the National Weather Service, NOAA, and FEMA.
- Consider available supplies of food, water and fuel.
- Check grounds and remove dead limbs, clean up loose debris and begin moving all loose equipment and materials.
- Make sure the Gwinnett Tech Police Department, Facilities Management and others have current telephone numbers for support responders such as water suppliers, emergency generator suppliers, fuel suppliers, food suppliers and others as needed. Ensure emergency generators and all vehicles are fueled and serviced.
- Identify alternate space to move critical equipment, chemicals and supplies that could be damaged from possible storm surge flooding. Consider boarding of windows depending on conditions and the directional approach of the storm. Consult Facilities Management for assistance.
- Make sure cellular telephones are fully charged. Install a new battery if needed.
- Make sure all storm drains are clear.
- Verify stock of sandbags and sand.
- Verify stock of plastic sheeting.
- Verify battery stock.

7.4 Forty-eight (48) hours before Hurricane Landfall

- College Emergency Officials review current conditions and recommends actions to the President.
- Libraries and the Conference Center begin preparation for priority collections and exhibits.
- Backup of student records, library catalogs, alumni records and other relevant data should occur at this stage.
- Ensure that athletic equipment, outdoor research equipment, trash and recyclable receptacles, benches and all other loose items that may become projectiles in high winds are appropriately secured.
- Ensure that contractors working on campus secure all equipment and materials from their site which may become projectiles in high winds.
- Make sure all essential vehicles are fully fueled, stocked and inspected. These include but are not limited to Facilities Management, Public Safety and EMS.
- Turn off unnecessary lighting and appliances, secure windows, doors and shutters, locking when appropriate.

- Make sure all storm response equipment is inspected and ready for operation. This includes but is not limited to chainsaws, blowers, water pumps, tractors and portable generators.

7.5 Thirty-six (36) Hours before Hurricane Landfall or 750 miles noted on Hurricane tracking map

- Based on the category classification of the hurricane the College Executive Team will make the decision for the evacuation of all students, faculty and non-essential staff and prepare to initiate Shelter-in-Place procedures.
- All College related functions are to be cancelled including classes, sporting events, lectures, and other functions if warranted (given conditions and warnings).
- Public Relations will notify the appropriate media of the Gwinnett Tech Hurricane Preparedness Plans and enact Crisis Communication Plan to notify Faculty/Staff and students.
- College departments initiate any specific departmental shut down procedures and begin evacuation of faculty and staff.
- Departments should back up computer data at this time by following College guidelines.
- Unplug all office equipment including computers and store off the flood.
- Protect books, valuables and equipment by covering with plastic sheeting.
- Close windows, lower all blinds/shades, close slats and draw curtains.
- Remove personal items that may become damaged since they are not covered by College Insurance.
- Research staff shall begin preparations of laboratory facilities by completing experiments, backing up computer data, storing materials and securing rooms.
- Research staff will begin to secure hazardous materials, including chemicals, biological agents and radioactive material.
- Close non-essential offices and departments at this time.
- College Officials initiate evacuation procedures.
- All essential personnel report to supervisors for team assignments.

7.5 Facilities Management Hurricane Procedures;

- All essential personnel report to supervisors for team assignments.
- Make final checks of roofs for loose debris. Clear roof drains.
- Open air vents leading to roofs to equalize pressure during storm.
- Consider taping windows adjacent to Shelter-In Place locations to prevent personal injury from shattered glass. Consider boarding of windows for more vulnerable buildings depending on conditions such as the directional approach of the storm.
- Issue plastic sheeting and other protective materials as requested and deemed appropriate.

7.6 Gwinnett Tech Police Hurricane Procedures:

- Gwinnett Tech Police personnel report to the Chief for assignments.
- Begin inspection of campus and help with evacuation of non-essential personnel.
- Secure unoccupied buildings if building evacuation occurs.

7.7 Gwinnett Tech Continuing Education Summer Session Hurricane Procedures:

- Reviews status of programs and plans for camp attendees.
- Consider changing plans with incoming camps.

7.8 Twenty-four (24) Hours before Hurricane Landfall or 500 miles noted on Hurricane tracking map

- Evacuate buildings and consider shut down of utilities in these buildings.
- Refuel all vehicles and continue securing equipment, assessing buildings and protecting properties from storm conditions.
- Gwinnett Tech Police help verify that all non-essential personnel have evacuated the campus and unoccupied buildings have been secured.
- Student Life will communicate with students that they should plan to stay on campus if they have not already left.

7.9 During Hurricane Landfall

- It is essential that all remaining persons stay indoors throughout the entire hurricane. During the storm, for maximum protection, persons should remain in the hallways. If you are not familiar with a hurricane, there is always a lull in the storm when the eye passes through the area. Once the eye passes through, the storm begins again, but from the opposite direction. **STAY INDOORS.**
- Persons should follow the instructions of College Officials including Gwinnett Tech Police.
- In the event of power failure during the height of a hurricane, there will be no elevator service. Do not attempt to travel between floors using elevators, First Aid and/or food service will be made available whenever the storm passes or when power is restored. Do not use candles during power outages due to the increased fire hazard.
- Do not attempt to open windows or doors to see what is happening outside.
- Report all accidents, injuries, broken windows or excessive water to the Gwinnett Tech Police at 678-226-7377 Lawrenceville campus 470-282-5440 Alpharetta North Fulton campus.
- Telephone calls should be made only in case of emergency since non-emergency calls can overload the phone system.

7.10 Resumption of Service

Following the lifting of the HURRICANE WARNING status, essential staff and Gwinnett Tech Police will assess and advise the College Emergency Team which buildings and facilities can be used safely for classes and other purposes. Recommendations for repair work or building closings will also be made.

The President will issue necessary directives and instructions concerning the resumption of classes and the use of College buildings and facilities.

8. EARTHQUAKE

Georgia resides in two (2) earthquake zones. The Southern part of the state is

designated a number (1) or minor expected damage zone. The northern part of the state is designated a number two (2) or moderate expected damage zone. Individuals who have experienced earthquakes can testify that mild tremors can be frightening if precautions for self-protection are unknown.

During an earthquake, remain calm and quickly follow the steps outlined below:

1. Do not rush outdoors, since most injuries occur from falling glass, plaster, loose balconies, debris, and electrical lines as people are leaving buildings.
2. If indoors sit or stand against an inside wall or doorway or take cover under a desk, table or bench (in case a wall or ceiling collapse or loose objects fall).
3. If you are outdoors, remain there. Do not stand under overhangs on the outside of buildings. Move away from power lines and stay in open areas, away from all structures.
4. Do not attempt to restrain falling objects unless your life is endangered by them.
5. If in an automobile, stop in the safest place available, preferably away from power lines and trees. Stop as quickly as safety permits, but stay in the vehicle for the shelter it offers.
6. After the initial shock, evaluate the situation and if emergency help is necessary call **campus Police 678-226-7377Lawrenceville campus, 470-282-5440 Alpharetta North Fulton campus or 911**. Protect yourself at all times and be prepared for aftershocks.
7. Damaged facilities should be reported to campus Police 678-226-7377Lawrenceville campus, 470-282-5440 Alpharetta North Fulton campus. **NOTE: Gas leaks and power failures create special hazards. Please refer to the section on utility failures.**
8. If the building fire alarm is sounded, walk to the nearest marked exit and ask others to do the same.
9. Assist the disabled in exiting the building!!! Remember elevators are reserved for the disabled persons use. **DO NOT USE ELEVATORS IN CASE OF FIRE. DO NOT PANIC.**
10. Once outside, move to a clear area at least 500 feet away from the affected buildings. Keep streets, fire lanes, hydrants and walkways clear for emergency vehicles and crews.
11. If requested, assist emergency crew as necessary.
12. A Campus Emergency Command Post may be set up near the emergency site. Keep clear of the Command Post unless you have official business.
13. **DO NOT RETURN TO AN EVACUATED BUILDING** unless told to do so by a College Official.