



The Signal

By AlertMedia | July 11, 2023

Welcome to *The Signal*—AlertMedia's weekly newsletter and your source for news and information on topics involving employee safety, business continuity, and emergency preparedness.

Live Webinar Reminder

How to Safeguard Your Business Travelers

Be sure to register for our webinar happening **tomorrow at 1 pm CT** to learn how to streamline protections for executives, employees, and company IP against a range of travel-disrupting threats.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

THIS WEEK IN THE SIGNAL

- ✓ What the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act means for you
- ✓ Multichannel fire communication templates
- ✓ How to protect & accommodate employees with disabilities
- ✓ Critical event management in a new era of safety threats
- ✓ STUDY: Tornado Alley is beginning to shift eastward

WHAT'S ON OUR RADAR

Understanding the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act

Under the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers are obligated to provide accommodations and accessibility for employees with medical conditions and disabilities. As of June 27, 2023, an eleven-year fight to include pregnant and postpartum employees among those who qualify finally concluded.

The [Pregnant Workers Fairness Act](#) (PWFA) has been passed into law. This bill expands on existing legislation by requiring covered employers to provide “reasonable accommodations” to a worker’s known limitations related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions unless the accommodation will cause the employer “undue hardship.” In other words, pregnant people can ask their employers for reasonable modifications to their job environment that will enable them to continue working during and after pregnancy.

According to the House Committee on Education & Labor, reasonable accommodations might include anything from providing water, bathroom, and sitting breaks to closer parking spaces, better-fitting uniforms, and breastmilk pumping arrangements.

[The PWFA also outlines several unlawful practices](#), such as requiring an employee to accept an accommodation without prior discussion or denying employment based on the need for accommodation.

What the PWFA Means for You

Supporting pregnant and postpartum employees isn't just a matter for Human Resources—safety leaders have a role to play as well.

Every year, thousands of workers report [pregnancy discrimination](#) to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, many citing a lack of reasonable accommodation. In 2022, a Bipartisan Policy Center poll found that nearly [one in four mothers considered quitting their jobs](#) due to insufficient pregnancy accommodations or fear of discrimination.

There are also health risks to consider. Hazards like [high temperatures](#), [inadequate PPE](#), chemical exposure, and sanitation all have the potential to pose severe harm to pregnant and [breastfeeding employees](#)—risks that fall under the purview of employee safety.

Additionally, consider how a loss in hireable demographics affects the strength and diversity of your staff. Losing pregnant or postpartum workers creates gaps in your workforce, restricts productivity, affects morale, and opens your business up to discrimination lawsuits. Hannah Olson, Co-Founder

and CEO of Disclo, an HR tech company that helps organizations manage health disclosures and accommodation requests, had this to say on [The Employee Safety Podcast](#):

Disability has now become the number one cause of discrimination lawsuits for companies, and the cost is really too great to ignore. In 2022, we saw a record-high amount of disability employment. But at the same time, we're also seeing record-high lawsuits in correlation. And so I think more people than ever are fighting back.

Why you should care: The fact that employment rates for disabled people are at an all-time high speaks volumes about comfort levels in disclosing disabilities and medical conditions to their employers and their desire to contribute to a culture of safety. But on the opposite side of the coin, employees aren't afraid to report businesses that discriminate based on medical conditions.

If you haven't done so yet, it would be beneficial to examine your safety and emergency preparedness plans through the lens of pregnant and postpartum workers. Ensuring their working environment includes the flexibility they might need to do their job not only strengthens your business's reputation as an inclusive place to work but could also save you from costly litigation in the future.

FEATURED FROM ALERTMEDIA

Every week, AlertMedia creates brand-new content to help safety, security, and business continuity professionals keep their people and organizations safe. Check out this week's featured content:

- ✓ **[Resource] Multichannel Fire Communication Templates**
In the event of a workplace fire, respond quickly and effectively with messaging tailored for SMS, email, voice call, mobile app, and event pages.
[GET THE TEMPLATES >>](#)
- ✓ **[Podcast] How to Protect and Accommodate Employees With Disabilities**
Disclo's Co-Founder and CEO, Hannah Olson, discusses how organizations can accommodate employee health requests, prioritize privacy, and practice inclusivity.
[LISTEN NOW >>](#)



[Blog] Critical Event Management in a New Era of Safety Threats

Though “common” emergencies need your attention, it’s also crucial to prepare for the hazards and threats you’re not expecting.

[KEEP READING >>](#)

REQUIRED READING

It’s not actually required, but these articles caught our attention. Enjoy!

- [The climate change–violence nexus: Implications for workplace violence prevention and threat assessment](#) (ASIS International)
 - [The U.S. wildfire season has been eerily quiet. That could soon change.](#) (The Washington Post)
 - [Removing the roadblocks that first-generation Americans face at work](#) (Harvard Business Review)
 - [Here’s how to keep cool and stay safe during a heat wave](#) (AP)
 - [A flying car that can also drive on the road was approved for testing](#) (Quartz)
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THE ROTATION

Your weekly conversation starter.

STUDY: Tornado Alley Is Beginning to Shift Eastward



Even if you don't live in the stretch of the central United States known as Tornado Alley, you've likely heard the term. There aren't clearly defined boundaries to this region, but its coinage comes from a 1952 research study that found the strongest tornado activity in Texas and Louisiana, northward into Oklahoma, Kansas, South Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska.

However, new data suggests that this belt of summer storms may be moving from the Plains states into the mid-South and Southeast. In 2022, researchers from The City University of New York began looking at category EF-2 or higher tornados that hit at least eight U.S. counties in one day—a phenomenon known as large tornado outbreaks, or LTOs. They found that from 1950–1980, Arkansas was the hotspot for the densest clusters of tornadoes. However, between 1989–2019, another 30-year span, the densest clusters of LTOs moved eastward, [occurring most frequently in Tennessee](#).

After decades of violent storms ripping through the central U.S., many in the region would be glad to get a break from tornado anxiety. But scientists aren't ready to relax. In an area unaccustomed to twisters, [tornado preparedness](#) is a foreign concept for people and businesses east of Tornado Alley. With 30–50% of the population of mid-South and southeastern U.S. residents living in mobile homes (no built-in storm shelters like Tornado Alley homes), tornados are another severe weather threat to look out for.

Meteorologist Shane Hinton with *KVUE News* in Austin breaks down the tornadic trends you need to know about in [this video](#).

Thank You for Reading *The Signal*

We hope you enjoyed this week's issue of *The Signal* by AlertMedia.

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401 S 1st Street, Suite 1400, Austin, TX 78704

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