

Severe weather can be serious threat to life and property. Thunderstorms bring with them the possibility of lightning, hail, strong winds, flash flooding and tornadoes.

## SEVERE WEATHER TERMS

A severe thunderstorm is one that produces hail at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in diameter, has winds of 58 miles per hour or greater, or produces a tornado.

**Severe Thunderstorm Watch** – Indicates conditions are favorable for a thunderstorm to occur within the next six hours in the watch area.

**Severe Thunderstorm Warning** – Indicates severe weather is occurring or is imminent within 30 minutes to an hour in the warning area.



## SEVERE WEATHER. SEVERE DANGER.

Each year, over 100 people are killed in this country by lightning strikes alone. Property loss from a single thunderstorm is often measured in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and losses from a well developed line of thunderstorms may be measured in the millions of dollars.

Thunderstorms bring with them a variety of dangers.

**Tornadoes** are generated by thunderstorms and account for an average of over 90 deaths and millions of dollars in lost property each year.

**Lightening** from thunderstorms kills over 100 people each year and causes over 300 injuries.

Thunderstorms generate **High Winds**, sometimes in excess of 125 miles per hour. These high winds can cause damage equal to that of a tornado.

**Flash Flooding** from excess rainfall associated with thunderstorms is responsible for an average of 70 deaths each year.

**Hail** from thunderstorms can be up to five inches in diameter and results in one billion dollars of property loss each year.

Most severe weather in this country occurs during the summer months, however severe weather can happen anywhere, at any time.

To protect life and property, you need to be prepared for severe weather, stay alert to changing weather, and use common sense when cleaning up after the storm has passed.

## PLAN AHEAD FOR SEVERE WEATHER

**Be Aware.** Know the dangers severe weather poses to life and property.

**Be Prepared.** When severe weather threatens you, your loved ones and your home or place of business, will you know what to do?

**Stay informed.** Listen to NOAA broadcasts and local media for updates on severe weather conditions. To check for storm warnings online, go to the NOAA National Weather Service website at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)

PLANNING  
AHEAD

# SEVERE WEATHER



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Severe weather can happen anywhere, at any time. To minimize the damage to property and life, you need to be prepared and stay informed.

## BEFORE SEVERE WEATHER STRIKES

Keep an eye on the sky. Warm, humid conditions are highly favorable for thunderstorm development. Dark skies, flashes of light, and gusts of wind can indicate a storm is approaching. Listen to local radio or television reports, or NOAA Weather Radio for information and instructions.

To prepare your home for a thunderstorm:

- Always remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall during a storm.
- Bring in any loose items that could be broken or blown away, including debris. These items can cause damage or serious injury in high winds.
- Install lightning rods.
- Consider installing permanent shutters for your windows.
- Get a battery-operated (and extra batteries) or hand crank radio.

Postpone outdoor activities if a thunderstorm is likely in your area and “If thunder roars, go indoors.” Being outdoors is never safe when there is lightning in the area. Stay indoors until 30 minutes have passed since you last heard a clap of thunder. Don’t forget pets and livestock. Bring them safely indoors before the storm begins.

Once inside, shutter windows and secure outside doors. If you do not have shutters, close window blinds, shades, and/or curtains. Unplug appliances and other electrical items before the storm arrives. Turn off air conditioners.

## DURING A THUNDERSTORM

If you are indoors, there are some steps you can take for improved lightning safety:

- Do not use corded phones, unless it is an emergency.
- Stay away from windows and doors. This will also protect you from broken glass in case of tornadoes, high winds or hail.
- Do not shower, bathe, or wash your hands. Avoid contact with bathtubs, water faucets, and sinks, as metal pipes can conduct electricity.
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment and cords, unplugging them before the storm arrives.

If you are outside, take shelter in whatever substantial, permanent, enclosed structure you can find. Avoid bleachers, gazebos, rain or picnic shelters, or baseball dugouts. If there are no sturdy buildings, take shelter in a hard top vehicle (avoid convertibles).

If you are driving during a thunderstorm and heavy rain is impairing visibility:

- Pull onto the shoulder of the road and stop.
- Make sure you are away from trees or tall objects that could fall on your vehicle.
- Turn on your hazard lights and keep the windows closed.
- Stay inside the vehicle, you are much safer than outside where the threat of getting struck by lightning is greater.
- If it begins to hail, lay down in the back seat with your back to the windows and cover your eyes.
- Proceed with caution after the storm passes. Just two feet of water can carry away most vehicles, so do not drive through high water. Fatalities caused by flooding are due to people trying to drive through water or people playing in high water.



## AFTER A THUNDERSTORM

If someone has been struck by lightning, seek medical assistance immediately. Next, check the following:

Breathing – If the victim is not breathing, begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.  
Heartbeat – If the victim’s heart has stopped, begin CPR.  
Pulse – If the victim has a pulse and is breathing, look for other injuries, such as:  
Burns – Look for burns in two locations, where the lightning entered the body and where it exited.  
Also look for nerve damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing or eyesight.

People who have been struck by lightning do not carry an electrical charge and are safe to handle.

Continue to listen to the radio or television for updated information. Check on neighbors who may need special assistance such as the elderly, or people with disabilities. Stay away from storm damaged areas and watch out for fallen power lines. If you see power lines down, report them immediately.

If you cannot get safely inside and you are:

In the woods

Seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.

In an open area

Go to the lowest place available, but be aware of the potential for flash flooding. Stay away from tall things – trees, towers, fences, telephone and power lines. Stay away from metal objects.

In a boat or swimming

Get to land immediately. Get off the beach, sand conducts electricity. Seek shelter.

If your hair stands on end (which means lightning is about to strike)

Crouch down on the balls of your feet, place your hands over your ears, and lower your head between your knees. Make yourself as small as possible and minimize contact with the ground. DO NOT lie down.