



The destructive forces of thunderstorms and lightning can be particularly dangerous and costly on the farm. High winds can damage buildings, overturn vehicles, uproot or damage trees. Lightning is the leading cause of farm fires and hail can injure animals left outdoors and damage crops. Preparing ahead can help minimize damage and speed your recovery.

## Before a Severe Storm

- **Check weather reports before planning work activities.**
  - Have a way of receiving weather information while you work, especially at remote locations.
  - Monitor for severe thunderstorms in your area at NOAA's National Weather Service National Storm Prediction Center - <http://www.spc.noaa.gov>
- **Develop a communication plan with your family and employees or co-workers.**
  - Know how to contact each other in the event of severe weather, especially if you are in separate locations.
  - Establish shelter locations on your property.
- **Identify potential hazards on your property.**
  - Secure structurally unstable materials (e.g., lumber, logs, equipment, fuel tanks) and loose equipment and materials (e.g., buckets, tools, etc.) which can become dangerous projectiles in high winds.
  - Fix loose siding, roofing, fence posts, etc., as these can become dangerous projectiles in high winds.
  - Know how to turn off electrical power, gas and water supplies for buildings on the farm.
  - Remove or fence off single trees in pastures to prevent animals from congregating under them.
  - Ground wire fences; current can travel up to two miles through a wire fence, which could be harmful to both livestock and humans.
- **Stockpile emergency materials**
  - Plywood, lumber, nails, hammer, saw, pry bar
  - Wire and rope to secure objects
  - Fire extinguishers at all barns and in all vehicles
  - A gas-powered generator in case of power failure
- **Make a list of your farm inventory, include:**
  - Livestock (species, number of animals)
  - Crops (acres, type).
  - Machinery and equipment (make, model #).
  - Hazardous substances (e.g., pesticides, fertilizers, fuels, medicines, other chemicals).
- **Review your insurance coverage.**

## During a Severe Storm

- **Stay informed.**
  - Listen to the radio or television for situation developments.
- **If there is time, turn off electrical power to machines, barns, and other structures that may become damaged.**
- **If a WARNING is issued – Seek shelter immediately!**
  - **Avoid** natural lightning rods • tall, isolated tree in an open area • hilltops in open fields.
  - In the woods, go to a low area (ravine or valley) under a thick growth of small trees; be alert for flash flooding.
  - If you have no shelter, make yourself the smallest target by squatting low to the ground on the balls of your feet, minimizing contact with the ground, and placing your hands on your knees with your head between them.
  - In a tractor or other vehicle, stay put. Vehicles often provide better protection than lying exposed in open fields, but avoid touching any metal.

## After a Severe Storm

- **Assess the situation.**
  - Survey damage to your home, buildings, equipment, livestock and crops.
  - Report any downed power lines.
- **Account for your inventory.**
  - Account for all livestock, fuels, chemicals, machinery and equipment; use the inventory list previously prepared.
  - Note any livestock losses.
  - Check machinery and equipment for damage.
  - Take photographs of all damage for insurance or emergency assistance purposes.
  - Report any hazardous materials (e.g., fuels, agricultural chemicals) spills or leaks to emergency response personnel.
- **Cleanup safely.**
  - Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves to protect your body from injury.
  - Stay away from downed power lines and report them.
  - Be aware of hazards that may cause injury to you or others cleaning up (e.g., chain saws, electrical or chemical hazards).
  - Use caution when clearing broken tree branches; downed or damaged power lines can send electrical current through them.
  - Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated; use in well ventilated areas.

Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010.

