

SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS AND YOUR FAMILY

Natural Disasters



Severe thunderstorms can produce lightning, hail, high winds, even tornadoes or flash flooding, all of which can cause injury to you or your family. Know how to protect your family before, during and after severe storms.

Before a Severe Storm

- **Know the warning system for your community.**
 - Learn the thunderstorm warning system for your county or locality.
 - Monitor for severe thunderstorms in your area at NOAA's National Weather Service National Storm Prediction Center - <http://www.spc.noaa.gov>
- **Know the terminology.**
 - A **severe thunderstorm WATCH** means storms are likely in your area—Be ready to take necessary action.
 - A **severe thunderstorm WARNING** means storms have been reported by spotters or indicated by radar – Take immediate action to stay safe.
- **Know the safest location for shelter in your home, workplace and school.**
- **Prepare an emergency kit. You may experience power outages or need to shelter-in-place due to the storm.**
 - Food, water and necessities for all members of the family to last at least 24 hours
 - Any medications needed for family members
 - First aid kit
 - Battery powered radio
 - Flashlight with extra batteries
 - Sleeping bags or blankets, and extra clothing

During a Severe Storm

- **Stay informed.**
 - Listen to the radio or television about the situation.
- **If a WARNING is issued – Seek shelter immediately.**
- **If you are home,**
 - Remain indoors; stay off porches.
 - Stay away from windows and doors.
- **If you are outdoors,**
 - Seek shelter immediately – such as a nearby home or building.
 - If no shelter is available – take shelter in a hard top (not convertible) automobile, but avoid touching any metal.
 - If you are in the woods, go to a low area such as a ravine or valley under a thick growth of small trees; be alert for flash flooding.

- **Avoid** natural lightning rods: tall, isolated tree in an open area • hilltops in open fields • the beach or a boat on the water • isolated sheds/small structures in open areas • anything metal—tractors, motorcycles, golf carts or clubs, bicycles.

- **Lightning safety tips, if you are inside your home.**
 - Avoid contact with corded phones; cordless and cellular telephones are safe to use.
 - Avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords; if you plan to unplug any electronic equipment, do so well before the storm arrives.
 - Avoid contact with plumbing, it can conduct electricity – do not wash your hands, shower, wash dishes, or do laundry.
- **Lightning safety tips, if you are caught outdoors.**
 - Squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet.
 - Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees.
 - Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact to the ground.
 - DO NOT lie flat on the ground.
 - Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning.

After a Severe Storm

- **Stay away from storm-damaged areas.**
- **Clean up safely.**
 - Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves.
 - Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.
 - Be aware of hazards that may cause injury to you or others cleaning up (e.g., chain saws, electrical or chemical hazards).
 - Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated; use in well ventilated areas.
- **If someone has been injured by lightning,**
 - Call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services.
 - Check the person for burns or other injuries; being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, loss of hearing or eyesight.
 - If breathing has stopped, begin rescue breathing.
 - If the heart has stopped beating, a trained person should give CPR.

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