

SEVERE WEATHER PREPAREDNESS TIPS

WATCH VS WARNING

- Weather Watch: Conditions indicate that a severe weather event may occur in a given area
- Weather Warning: A severe weather event has developed and is moving into a specific area

TORNADOES: THE BASICS

- A violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground
 - May appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms within the funnel
 - Has an average forward speed of 30 mph and rotating winds of 110 or less
 - Moves generally from Southeastern to Northeastern United States
 - Can be one mile wide and stay on the ground over 50 miles
 - Can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move on land
 - Identified as a dark, often greenish sky; large hail; or a loud roar similar to a freight train
- Can occur any time of the year anywhere in the US but most frequent east of the Rocky Mountains during the spring and summer months
- Mostly likely to occur between 3 and 9 p.m.
- Every year in the US there are an average of 1,200 tornadoes that cause an average of 70 fatalities and 1,500 injuries
 - People who are in mobile homes and automobiles are most at risk
 - Violent winds and debris slamming into buildings cause the most structural damage

TORNADOES: SAFETY TIPS

- No place is absolutely safe from a tornado.
- Do not stay in an automobile or mobile home.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in your automobile.
- Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.
- Seek shelter in a basement or interior room away from windows and doors.
 - If a basement is not available: a closet, bathroom, or interior hall will suffice.
 - If you are outside: lie flat in a ditch or ravine with your hands shielding your head.

THUNDERSTORMS: BASICS

- Thunderstorms can develop with little or no warning and reach severe conditions within minutes.
 - Of the estimated 100,000 thunderstorms each year, about 10 percent are classified as severe.
- All thunderstorms are dangerous.
 - Lightning occurs with all thunderstorms.
 - Besides lightning, thunderstorms produce tornadoes, strong winds, flash flooding, and hail.
- Thunderstorms are typically 15 miles in diameter and last an average of 30 minutes.
- There is a potential for flash floods or landslides with thunderstorms.
- Rainfall is usually the heaviest with slower moving storms (less than 10 mph).

THUNDERSTORMS: SAFETY TIPS

- Get inside a house, large building, or automobile as soon as possible.
- If caught outdoors: do not stand near a tall isolated tree or the tallest tree in a group.
- If caught driving:
 - Slow down.
 - Turn on windshield wipers and headlights.
 - Increase following distance.
 - Listen to radio for regular weather reports and traffic updates.
 - Pull over if visibility is limited. If possible, find a parking lot or side street. Put on flashers and pull as far off as possible.
- If caught on the water, return to land and find shelter immediately.
 - Winds can capsize boats.
 - Sailboats act as lightning rods.

LIGHTNING: BASICS

- Lightning results from the buildup and discharge of electrical energy between positively and negatively charged areas.
- Lightning is present in all thunderstorms and is very dangerous.
- There is no warning sign for lightning strikes.
 - Lightning strikes the earth about 20 million times each year or about 100 times every second.
 - Lightning may strike even if it is not raining. It may occur as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall.
- More people are killed from lightning strikes than tornadoes or hurricanes.
 - An average of 65 people are killed each year in the US and over 300 are injured.
 - Most injuries and fatalities occur when people are caught outdoors especially under or near tall trees, in or on the water, or near hilltops.
 - You do not have to be directly hit by lightning to be affected. It can jump from nearby objects that are struck or can travel along the ground from a nearby strike.
 - Lightning strikes are prevalent in the summer months during the afternoon and evening hours in the South, Southwest, and Midwest regions.
- Lightning also causes property damage. Many fires in Western US and Alaska are started by lightning.

LIGHTNING: SAFETY TIPS

- No place is absolutely safe.
 - The best shelter is an enclosed building with electrical wiring and plumbing. Stay away from windows, doors, and fireplaces.
 - The next best place to shelter is an enclosed metal vehicle with the windows up. Do not park under trees.
- If outdoor activities are planned, postpone them.
- If you are outside:
 - Take shelter under the shortest trees.
 - Find a ditch. Kneel on the ground and lean forward with your head lower than your back and place your hands on your thighs. Do not lie flat on the ground!
 - If you are in a crowd, spread out. Stay at least 15 feet apart.
- If boating or swimming:
 - Return to land and find shelter immediately.
 - If not, get as low as you possibly can by sheltering in the cabin of the boat.
- If driving, pull off the roadway. A lightning flash can startle a driver and cause temporary blindness especially at night.
- Stay away from metal objects such as fences, machinery, or sheds. Do not carry metal items such as umbrellas, tools, or golf clubs.
- Discontinue the use of any electrical appliances to include air conditioners and telephones.
- Avoid showering or bathing during thunderstorms.
- Follow the “30\30 Rule”. Go indoors, if after seeing lightning you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

BLACKOUTS: SAFETY TIPS

- Use only flashlights. Never use candles or an open flame.
- Turn off all electrical appliances and equipment.
- Do not run a generator inside your home or garage.
- Do not connect the generator to your home's electrical system.
- If a generator is used, connect equipment directly to outlets on generator.
- Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer.
- Backup computer's operating system and files regularly.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE SEVERE WEATHER STRIKES:

- **Gather information.**
 - Discuss the type of hazards that could affect your family. Know your home's vulnerability to storm surge, flooding, and wind.
- **Meet with your family to create a plan.**
 - Locate a safe room or the safest area in your home. Remember the safest place may not be in your home but in your community.
 - Determine escape routes from your home. Establish meeting places.
 - Have an out of state friend or family as a point of contact for your family.
 - Make a plan for what to do with your pets.
 - Identify non-perishable emergency and disaster supplies.
- **Implement your plan.**
 - Post emergency numbers by the telephone.
 - Install safety features such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, hurricane shutters, etc.
 - Inspect home for potential hazards or items that can move, fall, break, or catch fire. Correct the hazards as soon as possible.
 - Have your family learn basic safety measures such as CPR and how to dial 911. Also, have them know when and how to turn off your home's water, gas, and electricity supplies.
 - Stock at least three days' worth of non-perishable emergency and disaster supplies.
 - Assemble a disaster supply kit. Store the kit in a sturdy, easy-to-carry container such as a backpack or duffle bag. Important papers such be stored in a waterproof container.
- **Practice and maintain your plan.**
 - Ensure your family knows the meeting places, telephone numbers, and safety rules by conducting drills.
 - Inspect and test smoke alarms, fire extinguishers, and other safety features.
- **Replace stored food and water every 6 months**