

Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms compared to other natural events such as tornadoes and hurricanes may not seem significant. However, thunderstorms cause damage to buildings through hail and straight-line winds and significant rain can result in flooding and flash flooding. There is also the danger of lightning.

Most of the damage from thunderstorms is the result to straight-line winds. These winds can exceed 100 mile per hour. Some of these winds have the force of a tornado and create the same type of damage. In some instances, a thunderstorm will collapse. This results in a downburst or microburst. There is no advance warning when this will occur so it is important to take precautions whenever a thunderstorm is near you.

There are actions you can take prior to a thunderstorm:

1. Make sure your NOAA Weather Radio is in working order.
2. Listen to local media for weather alerts.
3. Check for items in you yard that could become dangerous in high winds. Remove dead trees and trim dead branches so that they will not break off and become wind blown objects during a storm.
4. Keep a map handy so you can track the path of storms.
5. When traveling, make it a point to know what county you are in so you determine if NOAA Weather alerts are for the county you are in.
6. Check the weather forecast before going to extended outdoor activities. Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are imminent.

Actions to take during a thunderstorm:

1. If outside, seek shelter inside a building. Do not take shelter in a shed, under trees, or convertible vehicles.
2. If lightening is present and no sturdy shelter is available, stay in a hardtop vehicle, keep the windows rolled up and do not touch anything metal.
3. If no shelter exists, go to a low area but be careful about the possibility of flooding.
4. If swimming, get out of the water and find shelter.
5. If your skin tingles and your hair stands on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Put your hands over your ears and put your head between your knees. Make yourself as small as possible. Do not lie down on the ground. Keep as little contact with the ground as possible.

When you are inside during a thunderstorm:

1. Do not shower or take a bath.
2. Stay off the telephone.
3. Turn off the air conditioner.
4. Listen to weather updates.

After the storm:

1. Make sure everyone is okay.
2. Check on family and friends.
3. Report downed power lines to the utility company.
4. Do not call 911 about downed power lines or debris in the road.
5. If your home has been damaged, call your insurance agent.
6. Do not drive unless necessary.
7. Do not drive through flooded streets. TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN!