

In a hailstorm, take cover immediately. Pets and livestock are particularly vulnerable to hail, so bring animals into shelter before storms begin.

If a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, take shelter. Get out of structures, such as mobile homes, that are susceptible to being blown over in high winds. Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.

How dangerous is lightning?

Lightning is a major threat during a thunderstorm. Lightning produces thunder in a thunderstorm and is very unpredictable, increasing the risk to individuals and property.

According to the National Weather Service, lightning kills on average more than 70 people and injures at least 300 others each year in the United States. While only about 10 percent of those struck are killed, the large majority of the 90 percent who survive suffer long-term injuries, such as memory loss, dizziness, muscle spasms, depression, and fatigue. Lightning also causes about \$5 billion in economic loss each year in the United States.

Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may occur as far as 10 miles (16 kilometers) from any rainfall. Heat lightning is actually lightning from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard.

You are in danger from lightning if you can hear thunder. Because light travels so much faster than sound, lightning flashes can sometimes be seen long before the resulting thunder is heard. When the lightning and thunder occur very close to one another, the lightning is striking nearby. To estimate the number of miles you are from a thunderstorm, count the number of seconds between a flash of lightning and the next clap of thunder. Divide this number by five.

More than 50 percent of lightning deaths occur after the thunderstorm has passed. The National Weather Service encourages you to practice the 30/30 lightning safety rule: If the time between seeing the lightning and hearing the thunder is less than 30 seconds, you are in danger. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

What is the best source of information about severe thunderstorms in my area?

Local radio or television stations or NOAA Weather Radio are the best sources of information about severe thunderstorms and other weather-related bulletins in your area.

NOAA Weather Radio is the prime alerting and critical information delivery system of the National Weather Service (NWS). NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazards information 24 hours a day over more than 650 stations in the 50 states, adjacent coastal waters, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the U.S. Pacific territories.

The NWS encourages people to buy a weather radio equipped with the Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME) feature. This feature automatically alerts you when important information is issued about severe thunderstorms or other weather-related hazards in your area. Information on NOAA Weather Radio is available from your local NWS office or at www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr.