



Severe Thunderstorms

...what you should know and best practices to stay safe!

Are you ready for severe weather? The best way to be prepared is to stay weather aware, especially when severe weather is expected. Make sure you know the terminology, have a plan and know your surroundings. Do you know the difference between a Watch and a Warning? What are the best sources for important weather information? Where should you take shelter if you're at home, school, or work?

What is a Severe Thunderstorm?

The National Weather Service defines a thunderstorm as severe when it produces a tornado, wind gust of 58 mph or greater, and/or hail that is one inch in diameter (quarter sized) or larger. Prior to 2010, the definition of severe hail was three quarters of an inch in diameter. The decision to raise this value to one inch was made in order to greatly decrease the number of warnings issued. Recent studies have also shown that hail smaller than quarter size does generally not pose a threat to life and property.

It should be noted that the National Weather Service does not issue warnings for lightning and given the deadly nature of lightning, you should always be aware of the lightning danger anytime a thunderstorm is nearby. A good rule of thumb to live by is:

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.



What is the Difference between a 'Watch' and a 'Warning'?

"A Severe Thunderstorm Watch has been issued for your area...". The words WATCH and WARNING have significant meanings when it comes to severe weather, but which is which? It is vital that you know the difference between the two.

WATCH: Conditions are favorable for severe weather development within the watch box over the next several hours.
Stay weather aware!

WARNING: Severe weather is imminent or occurring!
Take action immediately!

Safety Tips

Before the Storm

- Know your sources for up-to-date weather information.
 - NOAA Weather Radio
 - National Weather Service website (www.weather.gov)
 - Local TV broadcast
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio.
 - If you already have one, refresh the batteries every time you replace the batteries in your smoke detector and CO detector. Always make sure your radio is correctly programmed.
 - For any questions or assistance for programming your weather radio, contact your local National Weather Service office.
 - Have an emergency/communication plan & emergency kit prepared for you and your family.
 - Flashlight and batteries, bicycle helmet(s), out of town contact(s), and much more!
http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/checklist_1.pdf



During the Storm

- Stay Weather Aware!
 - Whether it's a NOAA Weather Radio or local media, always pay attention to new information as weather conditions are quickly changing.
- Do not rely on outdoor sirens!
 - Many locations do not have outdoor sirens, or have sirens that are not operational. Sirens were initially intended to sound for those caught outside in severe weather. If you are in a building or your home, you will likely not hear them. Do not wait to hear a siren to take shelter!
- Pay attention to Severe Thunderstorm Warnings
 - Damaging winds and large hail can be extremely dangerous.
 - They are capable of quickly evolving into a Tornado Warning.
- Always wear closed-toed shoes, and have your emergency plan and kit with you at all times.

For more safety and preparedness information, as well as what you should do after the storm, follow the following links from Ready.gov - <http://www.ready.gov/>

Thunderstorms and Lightning: <http://www.ready.gov/thunderstorms-lightning>