



NATURE SAFETY

INFORMATION & QUICK TIPS

Dry Weather • Earthquakes • Extreme Cold • Extreme Heat • Floods
Lightning • Thunderstorms • Tornadoes • Winter Storms • Winter Travel

DRY WEATHER

Under dry conditions, summer activities such as grilling and setting off fireworks have the potential to cause large fires. According to the National Fire Protection Association, grills and fireworks cause thousands of fires every year. Always use caution when handling anything that produces heat or could produce a spark, but take extra precautions during especially dry weather.

QUICK TIPS

- During dry weather, keep a fire extinguisher nearby outdoor cooking fires, such as when grilling.
- When finished with charcoal grilling, let the coals completely cool and dispose of them in a metal container.
- If a burn ban is in effect for the area, call the local fire department to inquire about what activities are included in the restriction.
- Never throw a lit cigarette out the window of a vehicle. It could land on dry grass or be blown into dry vegetation and start a fire.

DRY WEATHER SAFETY TIPS

OUTDOOR COOKING

Grill fires cause an average of 9,000 home fires per year. Before firing up the barbecue, review some tips to help prevent a delicious meal from being served with a side of hospital gelatin.

- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Avoid placing the grill on dry grass or other plant material. A stray spark could easily start a fire.
- Place grills well away from buildings and deck railings, and make sure they are clear of eaves and overhanging branches.
- Never leave an outdoor charcoal or gas grill unattended. Flames can become uncontrollable and start a large fire.
- Keep grills clean by removing grease or fat buildup.

- Regularly check propane grills for gas leaks. If a leak is found, have a professional service the product before using it again.
- Step away and immediately call the fire department if gas can be smelled during cooking.
- Only use lighter fluid that is designed for grilling, not gasoline or other flammable liquids.
- If using a charcoal starter fluid, never add it after the grill has started. The liquid could spark a flare-up and cause an injury.
- When finished with charcoal grilling, let the coals completely cool and dispose of them in a metal container.

FIREWORKS

Summer holidays are celebrated with fireworks, but they can cause significant injuries and lead to dangerous fires. In 2023, about 6,400 Americans visited a hospital emergency room with fireworks-related injuries, and fireworks caused about 31,000 fires in 2022.

- If a burn ban is in effect for the area, call the local fire department to inquire about what activities are included in the restriction. In some areas, a burn ban restricts the use of fireworks. Check a county's burn ban status on the statewide burn ban map.
- Do not use fireworks on or near dry vegetation or combustible materials.
- Be cautious when lighting fireworks when conditions are windy. The wind could blow a burning spark and set another area on fire.
- When using fireworks, always have a fire extinguisher, water supply, hose or bucket of water nearby in case of a fire. Before discarding devices, be sure to douse them thoroughly with water.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry area to prevent an accidental ignition.
- Supervise children closely when using fireworks. Sparklers are a popular firework given to children, and they burn at an extremely high temperature and can cause a major injury.
- Never light more than one firework at a time, and never attempt to re-light one that did not ignite completely.
- If a firework device ignites a fire, contact the local fire department or 911 immediately. Do not attempt to extinguish a large fire.
- For more fireworks safety tips, visit the IDHS Fireworks Safety page.

CIGARETTES AND VEHICLES

In dry weather, even something small such as a cigarette can have big consequences.

- Never throw a lit cigarette out the window of a vehicle. It could land on dry grass or be blown into dry vegetation and start a fire.
- Never walk away and leave a cigarette burning. Always use an ash tray.
- Never park your vehicle on dry grass or leaves.
- Avoid driving through tall grass.
- Make sure spark arresters on the internal combustion engines of off-road vehicles are clean.



EARTHQUAKES

Indiana is near two major seismic zones, and earthquake activity has been recorded in the area. Scientists expect incidents similar to the 1811–1812 New Madrid earthquakes will impact Indiana again. These natural disasters cannot be prevented, so preparedness is vital.

QUICK TIPS

- Earthquakes can occur any time of the day. Plan ahead for addressing an emergency during a work or school day.
- Create and practice a household reunification plan. Include designated contact information and a meeting location.
- During an earthquake, take shelter under sturdy furniture and hold onto it.
- If you are inside during an earthquake, stay inside.
- If there is a hissing sound or smell of gas, immediately leave the area.

EARTHQUAKE SAFETY TIPS

BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

Earthquakes occur at any time and season without any notice. Be ready for every stage of the incident by taking the time to prepare before an emergency.

- Create a waterproof disaster kit. The kit should support each person a minimum of seven days.
- Create a list of emergency phone numbers.
- Designate a meeting place away from the home and any collapsible structures.
- Earthquakes can occur any time of the day. Plan ahead for addressing an emergency during a work or school day.
- Create and practice a household reunification plan. Include designated contact information and a meeting location.
- Learn how to turn off water, gas and electricity supplies to the home from the main shut-off valve or switch. Contact the local utility company on how to properly turn off the lines.

- Practice Drop, Cover and Hold On with every household member and coworker.
- Place heavy objects on low shelves and light objects on top shelves.
- Secure heavy furniture such as bookcases, hanging TVs, kitchen appliances, air conditioners, furnaces and water heaters. Wall anchors are now commercially available and easy to install.
- If possible, have walls, chimneys, windows and foundations reinforced. Stronger structures better withstand the shocks of an earthquake.
- Consider purchasing earthquake insurance policies for homes, rental properties and businesses. Insurance coverage and prices can vary.

DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

Remembering to Drop, Cover and Hold On when an earthquake begins is important, but staying safe is possible if that process cannot be followed.

- Take shelter under sturdy furniture and hold onto it. The furniture will help protect against any falling debris.
- Cover the head and neck with arms.
- If outside, stay away from power lines, tall buildings, falling rocks or anything that could collapse.
- If in a vehicle, drive slowly to a location away from buildings, overpasses, underpasses and utility wires.
- If in a building or enclosed structure, never go outside.
- People with mobility disabilities should also seek cover.

AFTER AN EARTHQUAKE

The time following an earthquake can be dangerous because of potential fires, damaged buildings and other hazards. Broken glass and debris also create major concerns for potential injuries.

- Be prepared for aftershocks, which are smaller earthquakes that can follow for days to years after the main earthquake.
- Never use elevators to evacuate a building. If the power goes out, occupants will be trapped.
- Monitor local news radio, TV or social media postings for additional information or instructions from local officials.
- To prevent potential injury or death, do not re-enter a building with structural damage.
- If there is a hissing sound or smell of gas, immediately leave the area.
- Phone calls should be saved for emergencies. Phone wires may be damaged and have limited access.
- Check for injuries and care for those seriously injured.



EXTREME COLD

According to the National Weather Service, 1,100 Americans died due to cold weather from 1988 to 2023. Prolonged exposure to bitterly cold conditions without proper clothing can increase the chances of frostbite and hypothermia. Practicing proper cold weather safety and understanding the warning signs of cold weather illnesses can help decrease the dangers of extreme cold weather.

QUICK TIPS

- Wear warm clothing to limit your exposure. Use a hat, coat, mittens, pants, socks and closed shoes.
- Stay indoors as much as possible and try to minimize travel.
- If going outdoors, bundle up and take frequent breaks in a warm shelter.
- Cold-weather illnesses such as hypothermia can occur at 40 degrees Fahrenheit. A few warning signs are numbness, extremely low energy, discolored skin and fumbling hands. If you notice any of these signs, take the person's temperature. If it is below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, get medical attention immediately.

EXTREME COLD SAFETY TIPS

WINTER CLOTHING

It is crucial to dress appropriately with warm, durable clothing during extremely cold weather conditions. Decrease the chances of suffering from cold weather illnesses by wearing:

- A hat
- Earmuffs
- A scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth
- Thermal clothing material that retains body heat
- A water-resistant or tightly woven coat
- Long-sleeved shirt and coat that are snug at the wrist
- Insulated and waterproof mittens
- Two layers of socks with boots or shoes that are waterproof and have a flexible sole

WEATHER SAFETY

Without taking proper preparations, extremely cold weather can quickly become dangerous. Avoid these dangers by practicing these tips:

- Stay indoors as much as possible and try to minimize travel. If traveling cannot be avoided, create a vehicle emergency kit in case of accidents or becoming stranded.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions of any alternative-heating sources being used at home, such as space heaters. Always turn off alternative-heating sources before going to bed or leaving home.
- Take frequent breaks in a warm shelter while working outdoors. It also helps to drink warm (non-caffeinated) beverages and eat high-calorie foods during these breaks.
- Remember to never leave animals, especially pets, outside without adequate shelter.

HYPOTHERMIA AND FROSTBITE SYMPTOMS

Hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature) and frostbite (freezing of body parts) are both cold-weather illnesses that can occur when an individual is exposed to extremely cold temperatures. Symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite can vary based on age, health, diet and amount of outdoor activity.

Hypothermia

- Uncontrolled shivering
- Slurred speech
- Clumsy movements
- Fatigue
- Confusion

Frostbite

- Discoloration of the skin
- Numbness
- Unusually firm or waxy skin



EXTREME HEAT

Extreme heat occurs when temperatures reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit or higher for at least two to three days. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reports 2024 was the warmest year on record globally, and there is a worldwide trend of warmer than average temperatures. Overexposure to heat can be hazardous, and the humid conditions frequently experienced in Indiana can add to the discomfort and danger of high temperatures.

QUICK TIPS

- Use air conditioning or reflective materials in windows to help keep the house cooler.
- Watch for the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and seek medical attention as necessary.
- Drink fluids regularly, regardless of the activity level.
- Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing.
- Avoid strenuous activities.

EXTREME HEAT SAFETY TIPS

WATCH VS. WARNING

- Excessive Heat Watch: Issued when conditions are conducive for dangerous heat conditions within the next 24 to 72 hours.
- Excessive Heat Warning: Issued within 12 hours of the onset of dangerous heat conditions.

HEAT CRAMPS

The first sign that the body is not dealing well with the heat is cramping. This is the least dangerous form of heat illness, and small changes can reverse the symptoms.

Symptoms

- Body temperature begins to rise (up to 102 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Flushed appearance
- Muscular spasms in the abdomen or legs

Treatment

- Move to a shaded area or a cool place and rest.
- Put cold rags on the wrists, neck and face.
- Stretch if you have a cramp.
- Drink water or a sports drink. Do not drink caffeinated beverages because they can dehydrate the body more quickly.

HEAT EXHAUSTION

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body sweats and loses water and salt. If they are not replaced, the body cannot cool itself, which may cause heat stroke.

Symptoms

- Body temperature over 102 degrees Fahrenheit
- Excessive sweating
- Faint feeling
- Flushed appearance
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid, weak pulse

Treatment

- Drink water or a sports drink. The electrolytes in sports drinks will help rehydrate the body.
- If there is no improvement, or if the person cannot drink fluids, take them to an emergency room immediately.
- Move to a shaded area or a cool place and rest.
- Put cold rags on the wrists, neck, face, armpits or groin area.
- Stretch if muscle cramps occur.

HEAT STROKE

The most severe of all heat-related illnesses is heat stroke, and it occurs when the body can no longer cool itself. It's a very serious condition and could possibly result in death if immediate action is not taken.

Symptoms

- Body temperature over 103 degrees Fahrenheit
- Confusion or dizziness
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- No sweating
- Possible unconsciousness
- Rapid, strong pulse
- Warm skin

Treatment

- Move to a shaded area or a cool place to rest.
- Put ice under the person's armpits and on the groin area.

- Drink water or preferably a sports drink. Avoid caffeinated drinks because they will quicken the body's dehydration.
- If there is no improvement, the body temperature does not decrease or the individual cannot or will not consume fluids, go to an emergency room immediately or call 911.

PREPARATION

In some cases, small changes can help battle against extreme heat conditions.

- Use cardboard or a reflective material in windows to reflect the sun's rays. This will help keep the space slightly cooler. Covering house windows with drapery can help keep heat from entering the home.
- Install weather stripping around doors and windows to help keep warm air out and cool air inside the home. Adding insulation may also help.
- If possible, add window air conditioning units to keep cool air circulating in the home.

DURING A DAY OF EXTREME HEAT

Heat is the top weather-related killer in the United States. According to the National Weather Service, heat causes more fatalities each year than floods, lightning, tornadoes and hurricanes.

- Avoid strenuous activities when hot weather is expected.
- Stay hydrated and nourished. Drink fluids regularly, regardless of the activity level. Avoid sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic beverages because they increase the rate of dehydration.
- Eat small meals more frequently. Although heat may lessen appetites, the body needs proper nutrition to function.
- Take time to cool off. If possible, stay indoors in an air-conditioned building. If the home does not have air conditioning, spend time in an air-conditioned public facility. Check local news to see if there are any local heat-relief shelters.
- Never leave animals, children or elderly individuals inside a vehicle. The temperature inside vehicles can quickly become dangerously high even if the windows are rolled down completely.
- Dress appropriately for the high temperatures. Wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing. Light colors reflect heat better than dark colors.
- The skin and eyes also need to be protected. Wear the proper level of SPF sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses. This will protect the body from harmful ultraviolet rays.



FLOODS

The most common natural disaster America faces is flooding. In 2024, 181 lives were lost in floods. Natural disasters such as floods are unpredictable due to the fact they can take a few weeks or a few hours to develop. Floods cannot be prevented, but Hoosiers can be prepared when one occurs by taking the following safety precautions and considering buying flood insurance.

QUICK TIPS

- Contact insurance providers to purchase flood insurance. New policies take 30 days to become effective, so plan ahead.
- Become aware of flood plains nearby. Create a map of multiple possible evacuation routes in case they flood.
- Do not try to drive through floodwater because as little as 2 feet can cause most cars to float.
- After floods, stay out of any building if floodwaters remain. Avoid entering it before local officials have said it is safe to do so.
- Find a comprehensive set of resources about preparing for floods, flood insurance, recovering from a flood and more at [Floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov).

FLOOD SAFETY TIPS

TERMS TO KNOW

A variety of weather terms are used during natural disasters like flooding, and while they may sound similar, there are important differences among them.

- Flood: The overflowing of a waterway into a normally dry area.
- Flash Flood: A heavy rush of water normally caused by heavy rains. Flash floods occur with little to no warning.
- Flood Watch: Conditions for flooding are favorable, or conditions may develop leading to flash flooding.
- Flood Warning: A flood is occurring or is likely to occur soon.
- Flash Flood Warning: Flash flooding is imminent or occurring.

BEFORE A FLOOD

A flood can occur without much prior warning. Following a few, simple safety tips to prepare before a flood occurs will help keep the entire household safe during a stressful situation.

- Contact insurance providers to purchase flood insurance. New policies take 30 days to become effective, so plan ahead.
- Become aware of any flood plains in the area. Flood plains are flat areas of land near a body of water that is prone to flooding.
- If in a flood plain, install hot water heaters, electrical panels and furnaces on floors that have lower chances of being flooded.
- Make sure preparedness kits are portable for easy transport if evacuation is necessary. Preparedness kits should be tailored to household needs. Create a map of multiple possible evacuation routes.
- Have the basement waterproofed.
- If flooding is possible, try and create a barrier between the property and the water, or its likely path.

DURING A FLOOD

- Immediately evacuate the home and go to high ground if flooding is possible.
- If evacuating, take all pets, but choose a pet-friendly evacuation spot beforehand.
- Do not try to drive through water because as little as 2 feet can cause most cars to float, and as little as a few inches of moving water can wash most cars away with the current.
- Do not try to cross moving water on foot since as little as a few inches can knock an adult off his or her feet.
- Stay out of floodwaters. They can contain hazards such as waste and contaminants, downed power lines, vehicles, signs and trees.
- Monitor local news radio, TV or social media postings for additional information or instructions from local officials.

AFTER A FLOOD

Recovery after a flood focuses on the citizen's safety. Diligently following safety tips and information provided by local officials will help make the recovery process run as efficiently as possible.

- If injured, seek necessary medical care at the nearest hospital or clinic.
- Avoid disaster areas.
- Report broken utility lines to the appropriate authorities.
- Stay out of any building if floodwaters remain around the establishment.
- Avoid entering any building before local officials have said it is safe to do so.
- When entering buildings, use extreme caution. Watch for loose plaster, drywall and ceilings that could fall. Take pictures of the damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance claims.
- Look for fire hazards.
- Use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings.
- Wear sturdy shoes.
- Watch out for animals, especially poisonous snakes that may have come into buildings with the floodwaters.
- Throw away food that has come into contact with floodwaters. Some canned foods may be salvageable.
- Do not drink or use floodwater.

- Pump out a flooded basement gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.
 - Professionally service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits and leaching systems as soon as possible.
- Follow FEMA or Red Cross guidelines about cleaning flood-damaged homes.

LIGHTNING

Lightning is a deadly force of nature that kills dozens of people and injures hundreds annually in the United States, according to the National Weather Service. There is little a person can do to protect against lightning when outside, so Hoosiers are encouraged to go inside a building or vehicle during thunderstorms. Learn more about lightning and follow additional safety tips below to stay safe.

QUICK TIPS

- Consider buying surge protectors and installing lightning rods or a lightning protection system to protect the home, appliances and electronic devices.
- Know ahead of time where you can seek shelter and how long it will take you to get there if a storm occurs.
- Go inside when thunder or lightning is observed.
- Avoid open areas and stay away from tall, isolated trees or tall objects. When in a forest, seek a lower group of trees. Do not be the tallest object in the area.
- Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, so it is safe to touch them. In many cases, a person's heart or breathing may have stopped, so administer CPR after calling 911 and use an AED if available.

LIGHTNING SAFETY TIPS

STATISTICS

- Lightning kills approximately 30 people per year across the United States.
- About 10 percent of people struck by lightning are killed. The remaining 90 percent of people are left with varying degrees of disability, according to the National Weather Service.
- From 2006 to 2024, the number of fishermen killed by lightning (42) was three times more than golfers (14), according to the National Lightning Safety Council. Others: Beachgoers (32), campers (23) and people farming or ranching (24).
- More than 70 percent of lightning deaths occur during June, July and August.

PREPARATION

Lightning accompanies many storms, so knowing the weather forecast and patterns for the area can be helpful when planning outside activities. Follow these steps to stay informed and protect against lightning damage before a storm arrives:

- Consider buying surge protectors and installing lightning rods or a lightning protection system to protect the home, appliances and electronic devices.
- Monitor the weather before going outside by consulting the local weather forecast and by looking outside for signs of developing or approaching storm clouds.
- Know ahead of time where you can seek shelter and how long it will take you to get there if a storm occurs.
- Do not start an activity outside that you cannot stop quickly if a thunderstorm is expected, especially as early signs of a storm begin.
- Carry a portable weather radio, or have weather alerts set up on a cell phone, to stay alerted of changing weather conditions. Adjust plans to avoid being outside when a thunderstorm is expected.

DURING A THUNDERSTORM

Thunder is the shockwave from a lightning strike path. When thunder is heard from a nearby storm, then lightning is within 10 miles and can strike.

- Go inside when thunder or lightning is observed. Seeking cover in large, permanent buildings is best, not picnic shelters or tents.
- When a building is not available, seek shelter in a fully enclosed metal vehicle, such as a car or truck, with the windows completely shut.
- If in a boat, get to shore and indoors as quickly as possible when a thunderstorm approaches.
- If going inside is not possible, such as during a long hike, avoid open areas such as fields or hilltops and stay away from tall, isolated trees or tall objects. When in a forest, seek a lower group of trees. Do not be the tallest object in the area.
- Avoid water, wet items, electronic equipment, landline phones, plumbing and metal objects. They conduct electricity very well, and lightning can travel far along them.
- Avoid windows and exterior doors that may contain metal components.
- Stay sheltered until at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder. Electrical charges can linger in clouds after a storm seems to have passed.

WHEN LIGHTNING STRIKES

Immediate action is needed to save a victim of a lightning strike, so know beforehand what to do.

- If an individual is struck by lightning, immediate medical attention is needed, so dial 911 right away.
- Lightning can reach temperatures up to 50,000°F, which is hotter than the sun's surface. If it strikes a person, the lightning can cause severe injuries (primarily damage to the nervous system, but also burns). Cardiac arrest can also occur.
- Lightning victims do not carry an electrical charge, so it is safe to touch them. In many cases, a person's heart or breathing may have stopped, so administer CPR after calling 911 and use an AED if available.
- If possible, move a victim to a safer place inside to avoid another lightning strike. Evacuate anyone obviously injured by lightning. A victim could be disoriented or confused, with decision-making dangerously impaired.

THUNDERSTORMS

During the spring and summer months, thunderstorms that produce lightning, thunder, heavy rain, flooding, strong winds, tornadoes and hail can occur. These storms are extremely dangerous and can appear suddenly with little warning and may only last a few minutes, but they have the strength and power to cause a great amount of damage. In 2024, the National Weather Service received reports of hundreds of severe thunderstorms in Indiana, including more than 300 reports of wind damage and 91 reports of severe hail.

QUICK TIPS

- Check weather forecasts daily, purchase an all-hazard weather radio and have multiple ways to receive weather alerts.
- If caught outside and there are no shelters nearby, avoid taking shelter in or near water, high ground, large open areas, isolated trees, all metal objects and electrical wires.
- Basements, inner rooms and storm cellars provide the best protection during a thunderstorm. Stay in the center of the room, away from doors and windows.
- Stay sheltered until at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.
- In the event of flooding, do not walk or drive through floodwaters.

THUNDERSTORM SAFETY TIPS

TERMS TO KNOW

- Thunderstorm Watch: Conditions for a thunderstorm are favorable.
- Thunderstorm Warning: A thunderstorm has been reported or has been detected by the National Weather Service's weather radar.

BEFORE A THUNDERSTORM

Today, meteorologists can accurately track and predict thunderstorms, allowing Hoosiers time to complete simple preparations before a storm occurs.

- Check weather forecasts daily, purchase an all-hazard weather radio and have multiple ways to receive weather alerts.
- Plan outdoor events near a secure shelter where people can go in the event of a storm.
- Keep trees trimmed to prevent limbs from falling onto buildings, cars or people.
- If hail or strong winds are expected, park vehicles under a shelter to avoid damage.
- Make sure preparedness kits are portable for easy transport if evacuation is necessary. Preparedness kits should be tailored to household needs.
- Bring pets indoors before a storm moves into the area. Sheds, dog houses and garages do not provide ample protection from lightning, hail, high winds and tornadoes.

DURING A THUNDERSTORM

The middle stage of a storm is typically the most dangerous, because it is the period when tornadoes, heavy rains, lightning, hail and strong winds normally develop. Follow these tips to help ensure the household stays safe during this dangerous time.

- If a thunderstorm is expected, postpone or cancel outdoor activities and monitor weather reports on radio, television, websites and social media.
- If caught outside and there are no shelters nearby, avoid taking shelter in or near water, high ground, large open areas, isolated trees, all metal objects and electrical wires.
- Do not stop at bridges. Strong winds can cause damage to the structure and cause it to collapse, you are not protected from flying debris and vehicles stopped there can block roadways and prevent others from reaching real shelter.
- If caught out in the middle of a body of water, return to shore as soon as possible.
- Basements, inner rooms and storm cellars provide the best protection during a thunderstorm. Stay in the center of the room, away from doors and windows.
- If flooding is possible, evacuate the house and get to higher ground. Know the area and make sure you are familiar with alternate escape routes in the event one is blocked.
- If evacuation is necessary, take pets; however, shelters may not allow pets inside due to sanitary conditions, so plan accordingly.

LIGHTNING SAFETY

Thunderstorms always produce lightning, so it is important for Hoosiers to follow a few safety tips before, during and after lightning strikes.

- Lightning causes thunder. If thunder is heard in a location, then lightning can strike there. The best protection against being struck by lightning is going indoors.
- Lightning can reach temperatures up to 50,000°F, which is hotter than the sun's surface. If it strikes a person, the lightning can cause severe injuries (primarily damage to the nervous system, but also burns). Cardiac arrest can also occur. If an individual is struck by lightning, immediate medical attention is needed, so dial 911 right away.
- Consider buying surge protectors, lightning rods or a lightning protection system to protect the home, appliances and electronic devices.
- Avoid using water, touching electronic equipment and using landline phones. Electricity can travel through plumbing and phone lines.
- Avoid windows and exterior doors that may contain metal components.
- Stay sheltered until at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

AFTER A THUNDERSTORM

- Do not resume outdoor activities for at least 30 minutes after the last-seen lightning or last-heard thunder.
- If injured, seek necessary medical care.
- Avoid any damaged or fallen power lines and trees. Report them to the appropriate authorities right away.
- In the event of flooding, do not walk or drive through floodwaters. It takes as little as a few inches to knock an adult off his or her feet, and a few inches of moving water can wash most cars away with the current.
- Look for fire hazards and be aware of possible water, gas or oil leaks. Report broken utility lines to the appropriate authorities.

Take pictures of the damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance claims.

TORNADOES

More than 1,500 tornadoes have been verified in Indiana since 1950, causing more than 5,000 injuries and 300 fatalities. In 2024, 57 tornadoes were recorded in the state.

Tornadoes are violent, rotating cylinders that can have wind speeds in excess of 300 mph, be more than a mile wide and cover approximately 50 miles during destruction. Because tornadoes are one of the more common natural-disaster risks the state faces, it is imperative Hoosiers are prepared before one occurs.

QUICK TIPS

- Identify safe places to shelter. For optimal protection, choose basements, storm cellars and inner rooms away from doors, windows and outer walls.
- If you live in a mobile or manufactured home, identify an alternative shelter such as a single-family home, designated tornado shelter or building built with reinforced concrete. Also, find the best route to this shelter and practice how long it takes to get there.
- During tornado warnings, move to the lowest level of a sturdy building. It is best to go to a basement, safe room or storm cellar. If unavailable, use an interior room or hallway without windows.
- Stay out of damaged buildings until they have been inspected and cleared by a building official.

TORNADO SAFETY TIPS

WATCH VS. WARNING

- Tornado Watch: Conditions for a tornado are favorable. Stay alert about approaching storms.
- Tornado Warning: A tornado has been reported or has been detected by the National Weather Service's weather radar. Seek shelter immediately.

BEFORE A TORNADO

Meteorologists can predict these violent forces of nature, but even with warning tornadoes can still be devastating. The best protection against them is by being prepared.

- Purchase and configure an all-hazard weather radio, and have more than one way to get weather alerts.
- Make sure preparedness kits are portable for easy transport if evacuation is necessary. Preparedness kits should be tailored to household needs.
- Identify safe places to shelter. For optimal protection, choose basements, storm cellars and inner rooms away from doors, windows and outer walls.
- If you live in a mobile or manufactured home, identify an alternative shelter location such as a single-family home, designated tornado shelter or building built with reinforced concrete. Also, determine the best evacuation route to this shelter and practice how long it takes to get there. When severe weather is in the forecast, check ahead that these locations are still available to you.
- Review and practice your severe weather plans and those created by employers and local schools.
- Tornadoes can occur at any time, and often happen at night. Conduct household tornado drills at various times during the day so everyone is prepared for the possibilities.

DURING A TORNADO

- Move to the lowest level of a sturdy building. It is best to go to a basement, safe room or storm cellar. If unavailable, use an interior room or hallway where there are no windows. Cover your head and neck with your arms. Blankets, pillows and furniture can provide additional protection.
- If in a vehicle, the best choice is to get out and take shelter in a strong building. If no building is available, stay in the vehicle, keep your seatbelt on, lower your head below the window and cover your head and neck with your arms and a blanket.
- Do not take shelter at bridges. Strong winds can cause damage to the structure and cause it to collapse, you are not protected from flying debris and vehicles stopped there can block roadways and prevent others from reaching real shelter.
- Mobile or manufactured homes are not safe during a tornado, even if they are tied down. You are more than 15–20 times more likely to die in a mobile home than a permanent structure. When a tornado watch is issued, residents of these homes should leave immediately and find a shelter with a strong foundation instead.
- If possible, bring pets indoors and secure them to prevent escaping.

AFTER A TORNADO

Tornadoes have the ability to destroy buildings, uproot trees and leave behind a large amount of dangerous debris. These tips can help you and others stay safe immediately following a tornado:

- Stay out of damaged buildings until they have been inspected and cleared by a building official.
- Help others, especially those who might be trapped or injured.
- Reserve phone calls for emergencies. Phone wires may be damaged and have limited access.
- Stay far away from downed power lines.
- Be aware of possible gas leaks, so do not use matches or lighters.
- Monitor radio, television, website or social media outlets for further instructions from local officials.

WINDSTORMS

Windstorms are severe thunderstorms that carry strong winds of 58 mph or greater. High wind gusts can cause isolated damage, but sustained high-speed winds and gusts of at least 58 mph are considered severe and often called “straight-line winds.” These storms can cause widespread damage to roofs, mobile homes, trees and power lines. They can blow objects around and pose significant threats to your safety if you are not prepared.

Wind Advisories

The National Weather Service and local meteorologists may issue various kinds of wind advisories if strong storms and winds are expected to hit the area. Pay attention to these advisories to know how this may affect your home or plans for the day.

QUICK TIPS

- Secure loose outdoor items so they do not blow away into buildings or roadways.
- Park vehicles in a covered area or away from trees or structures that may fall.
- Sign up for weather alerts from the National Weather Service or local media sites.
- Stay away from fallen power lines and report them to 911.
- If safe, clear fallen debris away from roadways to ensure first responders can get access to areas that need assistance.

WINDSTORMS SAFETY TIPS

TYPES OF STORMS

Tornadoes are known for their dangerous, circular high-wind speeds that can cause major damage to a community. There are other types of storms whose winds move in straight lines instead of rotating, such as small but strong windstorms called downbursts.

Similarly, derechos are large, powerful wind events produced by severe thunderstorms. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, derechos cause more fatalities than EF0 and EF1 tornadoes due to derechos’ typical broad path of high winds and subsequent damage. It is common for derechos to travel at 60-70 mph and cause a wider area of damage compared to a tornado. Wind gusts exceed 58 mph along a

path at least 240 miles wide and may even approach 100 mph, reaching hurricane force wind speeds, as they did in the June 2012 derecho that crossed northern and central Indiana.

Important to note: As a storm approaches, the National Weather Service will issue a Severe Thunderstorm Warning instead of calling it a derecho. A derecho classification is determined afterward.

BEFORE A STORM

Ensure you and your family have an action plan before a windstorm hits.

- Create a disaster kit. Include flashlights for every household member, batteries, a radio and first-aid supplies.
- Secure loose outdoor items so they do not blow away into buildings or roadways, causing damage or injuries. This includes lawn and patio furniture, grills, tarps, trash cans and play equipment like trampolines.
- Have a certified arborist evaluate trees close to the home to assess if parts of the tree are unhealthy or weak and pose elevated risks
- Park vehicles in a covered area or away from trees or structures that may fall.
- Install storm shutters or plywood over windows and doors if strong winds are forecasted. Windblown objects or debris could break windows.
- Sign up for weather alerts from the National Weather Service or local media sites to stay informed about changing conditions.

DURING A STORM

Follow these tips to stay safe while the storm passes through.

- Postpone all outdoor activities.
- Stay indoors and away from windows and doors.
- If outside, take cover in a sturdy structure or in a vehicle as a last resort.
- If driving, pull over to the side of the road. Keep your seatbelt on, lower your head below the window and cover your head and neck with your arms and a blanket.
- Do not take cover under a bridge. Strong winds can cause damage to the structure and funnel debris there.

AFTER A STORM

Once a windstorm is over, be cautious before returning to regular activities.

- Stay at least 35 feet away from fallen power lines and report them to 911 and the power company.
- If safe, clear fallen debris away from roadways to ensure first responders can get access to areas that need assistance.
- Check your roof to look for any loose shingles or tiles. Call a professional to patch those spots before the next storm.
- Make sure that all loose objects or items you secured are still in place. Retrieve them if they blew away and if it is safe to do so.
- Watch for guidance from local officials about possible debris clearing assistance.
- Follow power outage safety tips if the storm has disrupted service.



WINTER STORMS

Every winter may not be as severe as predicted, but weather can change quickly. Preparation is key to Hoosiers staying safe for whatever the winter weather may throw at them.

Travel Advisories

Winter storms can create dangerous travel conditions and prompt counties across Indiana to issue local travel advisories. These advisories are shown on the IDHS statewide county travel status map. Many state agencies, private sector partners and non-governmental organizations rely on the map to make safe decisions during winter storms. Counties decide whether to issue travel advisories, watches or warnings, and the map updates in real time when a county emergency management agency reports its county's updated travel status to the state. Be sure to check the map before hitting the road when winter storms are expected.

QUICK TIPS

- Before use, have your fireplace or wood stove cleaned to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Stock up on non-perishable food and water in the event of a power outage or being snowed in.
- Know how to shut off water valves properly if a pipe were to burst due to extreme cold.
- Make sure to prepare for emergencies that may arise while traveling in winter weather by having a vehicle emergency kit ready.
- Obey speed limits. If driving significantly below the speed limit, turn on the vehicle's hazard lights.

WINTER STORM SAFETY TIPS

WATCH VS. ADVISORY VS. WARNING

Indiana Local Travel Advisory Statuses

Source: Indiana Code 10-14-3-29.5

- **Advisory:** The lowest level of local travel advisory means that routine travel or activities may be restricted in areas because of a hazardous situation, and individuals should use caution or avoid those areas.
- **Watch:** Means that conditions are threatening to the safety of the public. During a "watch" local travel advisory, only essential travel, such as to and from work or in emergency situations, is recommended, and

emergency action plans should be implemented by businesses, schools, government agencies and other organizations.

- **Warning:** The highest level of local travel advisory means that travel may be restricted to emergency management workers only. During a "warning" local travel advisory, individuals are directed to:
 - (A) refrain from all travel;
 - (B) comply with necessary emergency measures;
 - (C) cooperate with public officials and disaster services forces in executing emergency operations plans; and
 - (D) obey and comply with the lawful directions of properly identified officers.

National Weather Service Alerts

Source: National Weather Service

- **Advisory:** Winter weather advisories are issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet or a combination of these wintry elements is expected, but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria. Be prepared for winter driving conditions and possible travel difficulties. Use caution when driving.
- **Watch:** Winter storm watches are issued when conditions are favorable for a significant winter storm event (heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, heavy snow and blowing snow or a combination of events).
- **Warning:** Winter storm warnings are issued for a significant winter weather event including snow, ice, sleet or blowing snow, or a combination of these hazards. Travel will become difficult or impossible in some situations. Delay travel plans until conditions improve.

FOR THE HOME

Someone does not have to be outside to be affected by winter weather. Staying safe while indoors is important too.

- Monitor local radio, TV stations and social media websites for weather updates.
- Create an emergency preparedness kit.
- Stock up on non-perishable food and water in the event of a power outage or being snowed in.
- Make sure the house is well-insulated to avoid the need of an alternative heat source.
- If alternative heat sources are needed, follow the manufacturer's instructions and always turn them off before going to bed or leaving home.
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand in the event of a fire due to cooking or an alternative heating source.
- Know how to shut off water valves properly if a pipe were to burst due to extreme cold.
- Bring pets indoors or ensure they have a warm shelter area with unfrozen water.
- Take breaks often when shoveling snow. Approximately 100 people die every year from heart attacks they endured while shoveling snow.
- Change into dry clothes after outdoor activities to prevent frostbite.

POWER OUTAGES

Winter weather can impact electric utilities. If the power goes out, it is important to follow these tips until professionals can make repairs.

- Notify the electric utility company right away.
- Gather everyone in the most insulated and interior room available.
- Turn off and unplug most electronic devices to avoid a power surge. Leave one light on to know when the power has been restored.
- Before use, have your fireplace or wood stove cleaned to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Check travel conditions before determining if evacuation is necessary. If leaving the home, take medications and other must-need items, along with extra clothing, to a friend or family member's house, or a nearby shelter.
- Consider taking the time to check on neighbors, especially those with medical conditions.

DRIVING IN WINTER WEATHER

Driving during winter weather should be avoided as much as possible. However, when it cannot be, follow these tips to stay safe.

- Fill a vehicle's gasoline tank before a winter storm because the fuel will have a lower chance of freezing.
- Before cold weather hits, mechanics should check the vehicle's brakes, heater, defroster, tires and windshield wipers.
- Create an emergency preparedness kit for each vehicle.
- Always wear a safety belt.
- Obey speed limits. If driving significantly below the speed limit, turn on the vehicle's hazard lights.
- Avoid using cell phones and never text while driving.
- If stranded, do not exit the vehicle to find help unless it is within 100 yards.
- Display a bright piece of clothing to signal for help if stranded.
- Floor mats can be used for extra insulation.
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, never run a vehicle stuck in the snow more than 10 minutes each hour, and make sure the tailpipe is not blocked.

VEHICLE EMERGENCY KIT CHECKLIST

Make sure to prepare for emergencies that may arise while traveling in winter weather by having a vehicle emergency kit ready.

- Bag of sand or cat litter (for better tire traction)
- Blankets or a sleeping bag
- Cash
- First aid kit
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Jumper cables
- Maps
- Non-perishable, high-protein food
- Portable phone charger
- Road flares
- Shovel
- Spare clothes, mittens, scarves and hats
- Water
- Weather radio



WINTER TRAVEL SAFETY

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), most winter storm-related deaths are caused by vehicle accidents due to ice and snow. Indiana does not experience large winter storms every year, but it only takes a little ice or snow to make driving conditions hazardous. Getting your vehicle prepared before winter weather conditions occur will help make winter traveling safer and less stressful.

QUICK TIPS

- Get your vehicle prepared for winter weather by having a mechanic inspect it.
- Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle.
- Drive below the posted speed limit and leave plenty of space between other vehicles. Use your vehicle's hazard lights if driving significantly below the speed limit.
- If stranded, do not leave your vehicle. It protects you from harsh weather conditions. Only leave the vehicle if help is visible within about 100 yards.

WINTER TRAVEL SAFETY TIPS

MECHANIC'S CHECKLIST

It is important that your vehicle receives proper maintenance before winter weather arrives. Get your vehicle prepared for winter weather by having a mechanic inspect:

- Antifreeze levels
- Battery
- Belts and hoses
- Brakes
- Defroster
- Headlights, taillights and hazard lights
- Heater

- Oil
- Tires
- Windshield wipers

VEHICLE EMERGENCY KIT

Always keep an emergency kit in your vehicle that includes the following items:

- Bag of sand or cat litter (for better tire traction)
- Blankets or a sleeping bag
- Cash
- First aid kit
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Jumper cables
- Maps
- Non-perishable, high-protein food
- Portable phone charger
- Road flares
- Shovel
- Spare clothes, mittens, scarves and hats
- Water
- Weather radio

WINTER DRIVING

Snowy and icy roadways during winter weather is a challenge even for the most experienced drivers. Before leaving home, check local news weather reports and the Indiana county travel status map for current travel conditions. As you drive on roadways, make sure you:

- Drive below the posted speed limit and leave plenty of space between other vehicles. If driving significantly below the speed limit, turn on the vehicle's hazard lights.
- Stay attentive and reduce speeds during times of limited visibility.
- Do not tailgate or try to pass snowplows.
- Allow for more braking time on slick and snowy roads.
- Take it slow when approaching intersections, off-ramps and bridges in case of black ice.
- Share your planned destination, route and expected arrival time with someone.
- Keep windows, mirrors, headlights, taillights and brake lights clear of snow and ice.

IF STRANDED

Getting stranded is a possibility when deciding to travel during winter weather conditions. Besides using a phone to call for help, such as Hoosier Helpers if you are stuck along an interstate highway, follow these tips while you wait for rescue.

- Do not leave your vehicle. It protects you from harsh weather conditions, and you could become disoriented in the wind and snow. Only leave the vehicle if help is visible within about 100 yards (the length of a football field).

- Run the vehicle for about five minutes every half hour for heat. Keep in mind that your vehicle only uses about one gallon of gasoline per hour while idling.
- While running the vehicle for heat, open a window a little to prevent carbon monoxide buildup. Likewise, make sure there is no snow blocking the exhaust pipe.
- Tie a brightly colored cloth to your radio antenna or door to help rescuers see you.
- When it is not snowing, raise the hood of your vehicle to show you need help.
- Turn on the dome light at night while the vehicle is running. It may help rescuers find your vehicle in the dark.

TRAVEL ADVISORIES AND WINTER WEATHER

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) hosts the statewide county travel status map. Counties decide whether to issue travel advisories, watches or warnings, and the SEOC produces advanced weather summaries and assessments from its Watch Desk to inform county emergency management agency directors, who advise their county commissioners on making these local travel status decisions. When a county emergency management agency reports its county's updated travel status to the state, the change is reflected on the map.

Many state agencies, private sector partners and non-governmental organizations rely on the map to make safe decisions, especially during winter weather conditions. For example, the Indiana National Guard uses the map during times of flooding or heavy snow to help plan its routes through the state.