

SEVERE WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

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 2019, the [National Weather Service](#) received reports of more than 550 severe thunderstorms in Indiana, including more than 400 causing wind damage.

TERMS TO KNOW

A variety of weather terms are used during natural disasters such as thunderstorms, and while they may sound similar, there is an important difference among them.

- **Thunderstorm Watch:** Conditions for a thunderstorm are favorable.
- **Thunderstorm Warning:** A thunderstorm is occurring or the weather radar indicates one could develop soon.

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's 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 underpasses. Wind speeds increase as it moves under the structure and can cause serious injuries.
- 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 to know 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's important for Hoosiers to follow a few safety tips before, during and after lightning strikes.

- Lightning can reach temperatures up to 50,000°F, which is hotter than the Sun's surface³. The best protection against being struck by lightning is going indoors.
- 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.
- If an individual is struck by lightning, have someone dial 911 right away.

AFTER A THUNDERSTORM

- Do not resume outdoor activities for at least 30 minutes after the last-seen lightning or 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.

