

American
Red Cross

Are You Ready for a Thunderstorm?

Here's what you can do to prepare yourself and your family

Before lightning strikes—

- ✓ Keep an eye on the sky. Look for darkening skies, flashes of light, or increasing wind. Listen for the sound of thunder.
- ✓ If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck by lightning. Go to safe shelter immediately.
- ✓ Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for the latest weather forecasts.

When a storm approaches—

- ✓ Find shelter in a building or car. Keep car windows closed and avoid convertibles.
- ✓ Telephone lines and metal pipes can conduct electricity. Unplug appliances. Avoid using the telephone or any electrical appliances. (Leaving electric lights on, however, does not increase the chances of your home being struck by lightning.)
- ✓ Avoid taking a bath or shower, or running water for any other purpose.
- ✓ Turn off the air conditioner. Power surges from lightning can overload the compressor, resulting in a costly repair job!

- ✓ Draw blinds and shades over windows. If windows break due to objects blown by the wind, the shades will prevent glass from shattering into your home.

If caught outside—

- ✓ If you are in the woods, take shelter under the shorter trees.
- ✓ If you are boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter immediately!

Protecting yourself outside

- ✓ Go to a low-lying, open place away from trees, poles, or metal objects. Make sure the place you pick is not subject to flooding.
- ✓ Be a very small target! Squat low to the ground. Place your hands on your knees with your head between them. Make yourself the smallest target possible.
- ✓ Do not lie flat on the ground—this will make you a larger target!

After the storm passes—

- ✓ Stay away from storm-damaged areas.
- ✓ Listen to the radio for information and instructions.

If someone is struck by lightning—

- ✓ People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge and can be handled safely.
- ✓ Call for help. Get someone to dial 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) number.
- ✓ The injured person has received an electrical shock and may be burned, both where they were struck and where the electricity left their body. Check for burns in both places. Being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing or eyesight.
- ✓ Give first aid. If breathing has stopped, begin rescue breathing. If the heart has stopped beating, a trained person should give CPR. If the person has a pulse and is breathing, look and care for other possible injuries. Learn first aid and CPR by taking a Red Cross first aid and CPR course. Call your local Red Cross chapter for class schedules and fees.

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A thunderstorm is always accompanied by lightning. Thunderstorms are intense local storms averaging 20 miles across and reaching as high as 10 miles. Thunderstorms occur in all 50 states and all U.S. territories.

Be prepared by having various family members do the activities on the checklist below. Then get together to discuss and finalize your Family Disaster Plan.

- _____ **Pick a safe place in your home where family members can gather during a thunderstorm. This should be a place where there are no windows, skylights, or glass doors.**

Location of safe place: _____

- _____ **Discuss how you would know if a tornado is part of a thunderstorm. Does your community have a warning system? What other ways would you be notified of a tornado watch or warning?**

How we would be warned: _____

- _____ **Pick a safe place to be in your home in case of a tornado.**

The safe place you picked for a thunderstorm may not be the safest place to be during a tornado. If you hear a loud roar or hear a tornado warning, you need to go to the lowest floor of your home into a room where there are no windows or glass doors. (If you have a basement, make that your safe place to be for a tornado.)

Location of safe place to be in case of a tornado: _____

- _____ **Show children how to practice squatting low to the ground to be the smallest target possible for lightning in case they get caught outside in a thunderstorm. Show them how to place their hands on their knees with their head between their knees.**

Practice drill conducted: _____
(date)

- _____ **Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit in a clearly labeled, easy-to-grab container.**

Location of Disaster Supplies Kit: _____

- _____ **Take an American Red Cross first aid and CPR course to learn how to treat burns and how to give rescue breathing and administer CPR.**

Household member(s) trained in first aid and CPR: _____

Certifications good through: _____
(date)

And remember . . . when a thunderstorm, tornado, earthquake, flood, fire, or other emergency happens in your community, you can count on your local American Red Cross chapter to be there to help you and your family. Your Red Cross is not a government agency and depends on contributions of your time, money, and blood.

For more information, contact your local Red Cross chapter, National Weather Service office, or emergency management agency. You can also visit these Web sites:

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

Your local contact is:

National Weather Service: www.nws.noaa.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov