WEATHER & DISASTERS

Severe weather: watches, warnings & shelter

Know where to go before a warning arrives. Use more than one way to receive urgent weather information.

A warning for your location calls for immediate action. Follow its stated hazard and shelter instructions.

Prepare for changing conditions

- Check the National Weather Service forecast before outdoor plans. Have alerts that wake you overnight and a battery-backed source of updates.
- Identify a sturdy shelter, how to reach it and an alternative if the usual route is blocked. Share the plan with everyone present.
- Have shoes, a light, essential medicines and a charged phone ready. Secure loose outdoor items before the storm while it is safe.

When thunder is audible

- Enter a substantial building or enclosed metal-topped vehicle with windows closed. Picnic shelters, tents and isolated trees are not lightning shelters.
- Inside, avoid plumbing, corded phones and connected electrical equipment. Stay off porches and away from windows and exterior doors.
- Wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder before returning outdoors. No crouching position makes staying outside safe.

Wind and flooding threats

- For a tornado warning, go to a basement, safe room or small interior room away from windows. Protect the head and neck.
- Arrange an early move from a mobile home to sturdy shelter. Do not use an overpass as tornado protection.
- Keep out of floodwater and obey barriers. If water rises nearby, follow the warning and move to safety before routes close.

After the main storm passes

- Continue monitoring warnings; more storms or flooding may follow. Quieter weather does not mean an all-clear.
- Keep away from damaged buildings, fallen lines and hanging branches. Let the appropriate utility or emergency agency handle hazards.
- Check on neighbors by phone when possible. Report immediate danger through 911; use utility or non-emergency channels for routine damage reports.

Sources & further guidance

National Weather Service - lightning tips | www.weather.gov
National Weather Service - tornado actions | www.weather.gov
National Weather Service - severe weather | www.weather.gov