



National Weather Service



THUNDERSTORM SAFETY FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

BEFORE A THUNDERSTORM

- ✓ **Be Weather-Ready:** Check the forecast regularly to see if you're at risk for severe thunderstorms. Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay informed about watches and warnings. Preparation is key to staying safe and minimizing impacts.
- ✓ **Sign Up for Notifications:** Know how your community sends warnings. Check media severe thunderstorm alerts available in your area.
- ✓ **Create a Communications Plan:** Have a family plan that includes an emergency meeting place. Pick a safe room in your home such as a basement, storm cellar or an interior room on the lowest floor with no windows.
Get more details at [ready.gov/make-a-plan](https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan)
- ✓ **Practice Your Plan:** Conduct a family severe thunderstorm drill regularly so everyone knows what to do if damaging wind or large hail is approaching. Don't forget pets.
- ✓ **Prepare Your Home:** Keep trees trimmed near your house. If you have time before severe weather hits, put away loose objects, close windows and doors, and move valuable objects inside or under a sturdy structure.
- ✓ **Help Your Neighbor:** Take CPR training so you can help if someone is hurt during severe weather. Conduct a drill with elderly or disabled neighbors.



Sit down with your family or friends and develop a communications plan. Photo NOAA

DURING A THUNDERSTORM

- ✓ **Stay Weather-Ready:** Continue to listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay updated about watches and warnings.
- ✓ **At Your House:** Go to your secure location if you hear a severe thunderstorm warning and damaging wind or large hail is approaching. Take your pets if time allows.
- ✓ **At Your Workplace or School:** Stay away from windows if you are in a severe thunderstorm warning. Damaging wind or large hail could blow a heavy object at windows. Do not go to large open rooms such as cafeterias, gymnasiums or auditoriums.
- ✓ **Outside:** Go inside a sturdy building immediately if severe thunderstorms are approaching. Sheds and storage facilities are not safe. Taking shelter under a tree can be deadly. The tree may fall on you and you are at risk of getting struck by lightning.
- ✓ **In a vehicle:** Being in a hard-topped vehicle is safer than being outside; however, if you have time, drive to the closest secure shelter.

AFTER A THUNDERSTORM

- ✓ **Stay Informed:** Keep your NOAA Weather Radio or portable radio with you in your safe place/shelter, so you can listen for updates on watches and warnings and know whether the threat has passed.
- ✓ **Contact Your Family and Loved Ones:**
Let your family and close friends know you're okay so they can help spread the word. Power may be out and phone lines may be down.
- ✓ **Assess the Damage:** After you are sure the severe weather threat has ended, check your property for damage. When walking through storm damage, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and sturdy shoes. Contact local authorities if you see power lines down. Stay out of damaged buildings. Be aware of insurance scammers if your property has been damaged.
- ✓ **Help Your Neighbor:** If you see someone injured, call 911. Then, if you are trained, provide first aid until emergency responders arrive.

For more information, visit [weather.gov/safety/thunderstorm](https://www.weather.gov/safety/thunderstorm)



SEVERE THUNDERSTORM RISK CATEGORIES

	Thunderstorms (No Label)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No Severe Thunderstorms Expected, Lightning/Flooding threats exist with all thunderstorms, Winds to 40 mph, Small hail.
1	MARGINAL (MRGL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Isolated severe thunderstorms possible, Limited in duration and / or intensity. Winds 40 - 60 mph. Low tornado risk.
2	SLIGHT (SLGT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Scattered severe thunderstorms possible. ✓ Short-lived and / or not widespread, isolated intense storms possible. One or two tornadoes. ✓ Reports of strong wind damage ✓ Hail - 1", Isolated - 2"
3	ENHANCED (ENH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Numerous severe thunderstorms possible ✓ More persistent and / or widespread. ✓ A few tornadoes. Several reports of strong wind damage. ✓ Damaging hail - 1 - 2"
4	MODERATE (MDT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Widespread severe thunderstorms likely ✓ Long-lived, widespread and intense. ✓ Strong tornadoes. ✓ Widespread wind damage ✓ Destructive hail - 2"+
5	HIGH (HIGH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Widespread severe thunderstorms expected. ✓ Long-lived, very widespread and particularly intense. ✓ Tornado Outbreak. ✓ Derecho

Developed by the Storm Prediction Center (SPC)



THUNDERSTORMS WATCH VS. WARNING

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: **Be Prepared!**

Severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a severe thunderstorm warning is issued. Watches are issued by the Storm Prediction Center (spc.noaa.gov) for counties where severe thunderstorms may occur. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: **Take Action!**

A severe thunderstorm has been indicated by radar or reported by a spotter producing hail one inch or larger in diameter and/or winds exceeding 58 mph. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property. Take shelter in a substantial building. Severe thunderstorms can produce tornadoes with little or no advance warning.



After a tornado, watch out for dangerous debris, such as sharp metal, glass, or downed power lines.. Photo: NOAA