



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](https://www.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