



Spring Severe Weather Preparedness

Spring is a wonderful time of the year for people to spend time outdoors and enjoy the warm weather. It is also a time when people should be alert and pay attention to rapidly changing weather conditions. Severe thunderstorms with lightning, heavy rain, hail, high winds and even tornadoes are possible during this time of the year. All thunderstorms produce lightning and all have the potential for danger. Severe thunderstorms can produce tornadoes; nature's most violent storms. They can appear suddenly without warning and can be invisible until dust and debris are picked up or a funnel cloud appears.

In the United States, lightning kills 300 people and injures 80 on average, each year. Lightning's risk to individuals and property is increased because of its unpredictability, which emphasizes the importance of preparedness. It often strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur as far as 10 miles ahead of or after the arrival of the storm. Thunderstorms can occur singly, in clusters or in lines. The typical thunderstorm is 15 miles in diameter, producing heavy rain for a brief period from 30 to 60 minutes. Damage from these events in Michigan can be severe including damaged/destroyed buildings, massive tree damage, downed wires, closed roads and sudden flooding. As with most potential disasters: preparedness, monitoring the media and common sense can minimize the danger to you and your family.

During Severe Weather:

- 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 be struck by lightning.
- Tornado danger signs included dark, almost greenish sky; large hail; a large, dark, low-lying cloud or a loud roar, similar to a freight train.
- Seek shelter or evacuation requests made by officials or announcements on radio/television.
- Gather family members, bring pets indoors and have your emergency supply kit ready.
- During a tornado warning, if outside head indoors to a safe location. Basements, lower floors or interior hallways, bathrooms, closets, rooms are best for shelter.
- If outdoors with nowhere to go, lie flat in a ditch or low lying area. Cover your head with your hands.
- Close outside doors and window blinds, shades or curtains. Stay away from doors, windows and exterior walls. Stay in the shelter location until the danger has passed.
- During lightning, do not use wired telephones, touch electrical appliances or use running water. Cordless or cellular telephones are safe to use.
- If outdoors, head for shelter indoors or inside a vehicle. If boating or swimming, get out of the water immediately and get indoors.

After Severe Weather:

- Stay off roads to allow emergency crews to clear roads and provide emergency assistance.
- Use the telephone only for emergencies.
- Watch out for overhead hazards such as broken tree limbs, wires and other debris. Be cautious walking around.
- Clean everything that gets wet. For food, medicines and cosmetics; when in doubt, throw it out.
- Check on neighbors, particularly elderly or those who may require special assistance.
- Take photographs/videos of damage as soon as possible. Contact your insurance company to file a claim.