

Protect Yourself from Severe Thunderstorms

Lightning Safety Week is June 20-26

COLUMBUS, OH – In an annual coordinated effort with the National Weather Service (NWS), the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness is promoting June 20-26 as National Lightning Safety Awareness Week and encourages all Ohioans to know what to do before, during, and after thunderstorms, and to practice severe weather safety and preparedness throughout the summer.

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

According to the NWS, every year in the United States, there are approximately 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes, and roughly 300 people a year are struck by lightning. Of those struck, an average of twenty people are killed, and others may suffer lifelong disabilities.

Two people recently died after being struck by lightning in the United States: A 70-year-old man in New Jersey died on June 9, and a 15-year-old girl in Georgia died on June 12. In 2020, a total of seventeen people in eleven states, died from being struck by lightning. There were no lightning-strike fatalities in Ohio last year.

The number of lightning-strike fatalities is down in part because of COVID-19 Stay at Home orders last year, and in part because people are more aware of what to do when thunderstorms threaten such as seeking shelter inside a sturdy building or a vehicle.

“It is imperative to know lightning safety. Lightning is one of the world’s most underrated weather hazards,” said Ohio Emergency Management Agency Executive Director Sima Merick. “According to the National Weather Service, lightning is not confined to just thunderstorms. Lightning has been recorded in volcanic eruptions, snowstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and even wildfires. Everyone must learn that there is no safe place outdoors when severe storms are in the area.”

The NWS and the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA) encourage Ohioans to be safe this summer, and to have an emergency plan for not only severe thunderstorms, but for all weather hazards. All Ohioans are encouraged to follow the noted safety precautions:

- Make listening or reading weather reports a part of planning your day. If the weather forecast calls for thunderstorms, you may need to postpone your trip or outdoor activity.
- Know the difference between a Thunderstorm Watch and a Thunderstorm Warning.
- ***“When thunder roars, go indoors!”*** Stop outdoor activities and seek a safe, enclosed shelter immediately. This includes all water activities.
- Remember the 30-30 Rule. After observing lightning, start counting to 30. If you hear thunder before reaching 30, go indoors. Suspend outdoor activities for at least 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.
- If shelter from the storm is not available, crouch down low, with as little of your body touching the ground as possible. Lightning can cause electric currents along the top of the ground that can be deadly up to, and exceeding, 100 feet away.

Prepare Before the Storm

- Know your area’s risk for thunder and lightning. Spring and summer are typical seasons for thunderstorms, but they can occur year-round, day or night.
- Sign up for your local emergency notification system or download a weather app. The Emergency Alert System and NOAA Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.
- Cut down or trim trees that may be in danger of falling onto your home.

- Consider buying surge protectors, a lightning protection system, or lightning rods to protect your home, appliances, and electronic devices.

Survive During the Storm

- When you hear thunder or see lightning, move to safe shelter immediately, such as a substantial building, or a metal-topped vehicle (not a convertible), with the windows rolled up.
- Pay attention to weather reports and thunderstorm warnings.
- Get out and away from bodies of water. If boating, fishing, or swimming, move to land and find a sturdy, grounded shelter or vehicle immediately.
- If indoors, avoid running water or using landline phones. Electricity can travel through plumbing and telephone lines.
- Never drive or walk through flooded roadways. **Turn Around Don't Drown®**. It takes just six inches of fast-moving water to knock an adult down, and about twelve inches of moving water can sweep away most vehicles.

Be Safe After the Storm

- Listen to local authorities and weather forecasts for storm watches or warnings or for any instructions regarding potential flash flooding.
- Wait 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder before resuming outdoor activities.
- Watch for fallen power lines or broken tree limbs. Report hazards immediately.

For additional information, contact:

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