

# Thunder and lightning rolling your way?

## ■ Weather summer storms safely with these helpful tips

All thunderstorms produce lightning and all have the potential for danger. Those dangers can include tornadoes, strong winds, hail, wildfires, and flash flooding, which is responsible for more fatalities than any other thunderstorm-related hazard.

In the United States, lightning kills 300 people and injures 80 on average, each year. And lightning's risk to individuals and property increases because of its unpredictability—it often strikes outside of heavy rainfall , up to 10 miles away.

Ready America, a national public service campaign from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), champions the 30/30 Lightning Safety Rule. Go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

It's also important to be familiar with the terms used to identify thunderstorm hazards. For instance, a thunderstorm watch means there is a possibility of a thunderstorm in your area. A thunderstorm warning means a thunderstorm is occurring or will likely occur soon. If you are advised to take shelter, do so immediately.

There are several things you can do to prepare your home for summer storms:

- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage during a severe thunderstorm.
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- Shutter windows and secure outside doors. If shutters are not available, close window blinds, shades , or curtains.

Finally, as with all emergency situations, listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials. For more tips on weathering storms safely, visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

## **Lightening Strikes – Period!**

Data from the National Weather Service show that lightning strikes are fatal in approximately 10 percent of strike victims. Another 70 percent of survivors suffer serious, long-term effects.

Outdoors is the most dangerous place to be during a lightning storm. Because lightning can travel sideways for up to 10 miles, blue skies are not a sign of safety. If you hear thunder, take cover. For protection in homes and buildings, consider installing a lightning protection system to intercept lightning strikes and guide the current harmlessly to the ground.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends following these guidelines to stay safe during electrical storms:

- If possible, go indoors. Once indoors, stay away from windows and doors. Do not use corded telephones except for emergencies.
- Unplug electronic equipment before the storm arrives and avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords during storms.
- Avoid contact with plumbing, including sinks, baths and faucets.
- If outdoors, go to a low point. Lightning hits the tallest object. Get down if you are in an exposed area. Stay away from trees.
- Avoid metal. Don't hold metal items, including bats, golf clubs, fishing rods, tennis rackets or tools. Avoid metal sheds, clothes lines, poles and fences.

If you feel a tingling sensation or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down and cover your ears. Stay away from water. This includes pools, lakes, puddles and anything damp, such as wet poles or grass.

Don't stand close to other people. Spread out. And don't forget pets during thunderstorms. Doghouses are not lightning-safe. Dogs that are chained can easily fall victim to a lightning strike.

Victims of lightning strikes should be given CPR if necessary and get medical attention.

For more information on lightening safety, go to these Web sites:

- Electrical Safety Foundation International – [www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org)
- Lightning Protection Institute – [www.lightning.org](http://www.lightning.org).
- For more on work place safety: U.S. Department of Labor's

Occupational Safety and Health Administration – [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

- For consumer safety: Consumer Product Safety Commission – [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).