



FEMA
Region 2



Preparedness and Resilience TIP Series

Severe Weather Preparedness Tips



Severe weather can happen anytime, in any part of the country. Severe weather can include hazardous conditions produced by thunderstorms, including damaging winds, tornadoes, large hail, flooding and flash flooding.

For more tips on how to prepare,
visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).



Prepare for Thunderstorms & Lightning

Know Your Risk

Know your area's risk for thunderstorms. In most places they can occur year-round and at any hour. Sign up for your community's warning system. The [Emergency Alert System \(EAS\)](#) and [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Weather Radio](#) also provide emergency alerts.

Strengthen Your Home

Cut down or trim trees that may be in danger of falling on your home. Consider buying surge protectors, lightning rods or a lightning protection system to protect your home, appliances and electronic devices.

Make an Emergency Plan

Create an [emergency plan](#) so that you and your family know what to do, where to go and what you will need to protect yourselves from the effects of a thunderstorm. Identify sturdy buildings close to where you live, work, study and play.

Stay Safe During Thunderstorms & Lightning

If you are under a thunderstorm warning:

- **When thunder roars, go indoors!** Move from outdoors into a building or car with a roof.
- Pay attention to alerts and warnings.
- Avoid using electronic devices connected to an electrical outlet.
- Avoid running water.
- **Turn Around. Don't Drown!** Do not drive through flooded roadways. Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

Stay Safe After Thunderstorms & Lightning

- Pay attention to authorities and weather forecasts for information on whether it is safe to go outside and instructions regarding potential flash flooding.
- Watch for fallen power lines and trees. Report them immediately.

[American Red Cross THUNDERSTORM Safety Checklist](#)



Prepare for a Flood

Know Your Risk

Visit [FEMA's Flood Map Service Center](#) to know types of flood risk in your area. However, remember that flooding doesn't follow lines on a map. Where it can rain it can flood. Sign up for your community's warning system. The [Emergency Alert System \(EAS\)](#) and [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts. The [National Risk Index](#) is an easy-to-use, interactive tool that shows which communities are most at risk to natural hazards like flooding.

Purchase Flood Insurance

Purchase or renew a flood insurance policy. Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover flooding. It typically takes up to 30 days for a policy to go into effect so the time to buy is well before a disaster. [Get flood coverage under the National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\)](#).

Preparing for a Flood

[Make a plan](#) for your household, including [your pets](#), so that you and your family know what to do, where to go, and what you will need to protect yourselves from flooding. Learn and practice evacuation routes, shelter plans, and flash flood response. Gather supplies, including non-perishable foods, cleaning supplies, and water for several days, in case you must leave immediately or if services are cut off in your area.

In Case of Emergency

Keep important documents in a waterproof container. Create password-protected digital copies. Protect your property. Move valuables to higher levels. Declutter drains and gutters. Install check valves. Consider a sump pump with a battery.

Staying Safe During a Flood

- Evacuate immediately, if told to evacuate. Never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of flooded areas.
- Contact your healthcare provider If you are sick and need medical attention. Wait for further care instructions and shelter in place, if possible. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1.
- Listen to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio or local alerting systems for current emergency information and instructions regarding flooding.
- Do not walk, swim or drive through flood waters. **Turn Around. Don't Drown!**
- Stay off bridges over fast-moving water. Fast-moving water can wash bridges away without warning.
- Stay inside your car if it is trapped in rapidly moving water. Get on the roof if water is rising inside the car.
- Get to the highest level if trapped in a building. Only get on the roof if necessary and once there signal for help. Do not climb into a closed attic to avoid getting trapped by rising floodwater.

Staying Safe After a Flood

- Pay attention to authorities for information and instructions. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Avoid driving except in emergencies.
- Wear heavy work gloves, protective clothing and boots during clean up and use appropriate face coverings or masks if cleaning [mold or other debris](#).
- People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.
- Be aware that snakes and other animals may be in your house.
- Be aware of the risk of electrocution. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. Turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock if it is safe to do so.
- Avoid wading in floodwater, which can be contaminated and contain dangerous debris. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.
- Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machinery ONLY outdoors and away from windows.

American Red Cross FLOOD Safety Checklist



Prepare for a Tornado

Know Your Risk

- **Know your area's tornado risk.** In the U.S., the Midwest and the Southeast have a greater risk for tornadoes.
- **Know the signs of a tornado**, including a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud, an approaching cloud of debris, or a loud roar like a freight train.
- **Sign up for your community's warning system.** The

Emergency Alert System (EAS) and NOAA Weather Radio also provide [emergency alerts](#). If your community has sirens, then become familiar with the warning tone.

- **Pay attention to weather reports.** Meteorologists can predict when conditions might be right for a tornado.
- **Identify and practice going to a safe shelter** such as a [safe room built using FEMA criteria](#) or a storm shelter built to ICC 500 standards. The next best protection is a small, interior, windowless room or basement on the lowest level of a sturdy building.
- **[Plan for your pet](#).** They are an important member of your family, so they need to be included in your family's emergency plan.
- **Prepare for long-term stay at home or sheltering in place** by gathering [emergency supplies](#), cleaning supplies, non-perishable [foods](#), [water](#), medical supplies and medication.

Staying Safe During a Tornado

- **Immediately go to a safe location that you have identified.**
- **Pay attention to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio, or local alerting systems** for current emergency information and instructions.
- **Protect yourself** by covering your head or neck with your arms and putting materials such as furniture and blankets around or on top of you.
- **In a car or truck:** There is no safe option when caught in a tornado in a car, just slightly less-dangerous ones.
 - If the tornado is visible, far away, and the traffic is light, you may be able to drive out of its path by moving at right angles to the tornado.
 - If you are caught by extreme winds or flying debris, park the car as quickly and safely as possible -- out of the traffic lanes.
 - Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows; cover your head with your hands and a blanket, coat, or other cushion if possible.
 - If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, leave your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.
 - Avoid seeking shelter under bridges, which can create deadly traffic hazards while offering little protection against flying debris.

Staying Safe After a Tornado

- **Save your phone calls for emergencies and use text messaging or social media** to communicate with family and friends.
- **Pay attention to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio, and local authorities** for updated information.
- **Stay clear of fallen power lines or broken utility lines.**
- **Contact your healthcare provider if you are sick and need medical attention.** Wait for further care instructions and continue to shelter in place.
- **Wear appropriate gear during clean-up** such as thick-soled shoes, long pants, and work gloves, use appropriate face coverings or masks if cleaning [mold or other debris](#).

[American Red Cross TORNADO Safety Checklist](#)

For more tips on how to prepare, visit [Ready.gov](#).