

# Staying Safe During a Thunderstorm

While thunderstorms can put on a spectacular display of light and sound, they can also be extremely dangerous -- even deadly. Dangers associated with thunderstorms include lightening, hail, heavy rain, flooding, strong winds, and tornados. Knowing what to do before, during, and after Mother Nature strikes is key to protecting yourself from this very real threat.

**Know the difference between a "watch" and a "warning."** Dark, low rolling clouds, lightening, and thunder are the most common signs of an approaching thunderstorm. If these conditions exist, check your local news to see if a thunderstorm watch has been issued. In case of a watch, stay vigilant and start making preparations to take shelter. If an actual thunderstorm has been spotted or picked up on radar, a warning will be issued which means it's time to take shelter. Severe weather warnings are issued on a county basis, so know your county's name.

**Calculate how far away the storm is from you.** In case you do not have access to the news, a good way to determine if you're in danger is to count the seconds between seeing the lightening and hearing the thunder. If the time is 30 seconds or less, the lightening is close enough to be a threat and you should take shelter.

**Taking shelter.** If a thunderstorm is approaching, stay inside. Don't take a bath or shower or run any water. Unplug all electrical appliances. Avoid using the telephone unless it's an emergency. Close the windows, window coverings, and doors. Wait for the storm to pass. Protecting yourself outside, stay in your car with the windows up. Avoid touching any metal in the car. If you're swimming or in a boat, get out of the water immediately. Avoid being under any trees, telephone poles, or tall isolated object that could get hit by lightening.

If you don't have a car, go to a low-lying open place away from trees, poles, or metal objects. Squat low to the ground, and make yourself as small as possible. Do not lie flat on the ground as you are more likely to get hit by lightening. In the woods, take shelter under shorter trees.

**Stay put after the thunderstorm.** Stay inside for at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightening. More than half of lightening deaths occur after the storm has passed. Stay tuned to your local forecast for further information.