

Thunderstorms and Lightning Emergency Preparations

All thunder and lightning storms are dangerous. Every thunderstorm produces lightning. People struck by lightning can suffer fatal or severe injuries with a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms. Other associated dangers include tornados, strong winds, hail, and flash flooding.

“Dry thunderstorms” do not produce rain that reaches the ground because falling raindrops evaporate, but lightning can still strike causing fires and other damage.

Facts About Thunderstorms

- They may occur singly, in clusters, or in lines.
- Some of the most severe occur when a single thunderstorm affects one location for an extended time.
- Thunderstorms typically produce heavy rain for a brief period.
- Warm, humid conditions are highly favourable for thunderstorm development.

Facts About Lightning

- Lightning’s unpredictability increases the risk to individuals and property.
- Lightning often strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall.
- “Heat lightning” is actually lightning from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard, but the storm may be moving in your direction.
- Most lightning deaths and injuries occur when people are caught outdoors in the summer months.

Be Prepared for Thunderstorms and Lightning

Check for weather bulletins on [Environment Canada Weather](#) and [EMO Nova Scotia](#)

- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.
- “If thunder roars, go indoors”! No place outside is safe when lightning is in the area. Stay indoors until at least 30 minutes have passed after hearing the last clap of thunder and weather bulletins say it is safe.
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment and cords. Unplug electronic equipment well before the storm to avoid damaging power surges.
Avoid contact with plumbing. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity. Do not: wash your hands; take a shower; wash dishes; or do laundry.
- Do not lie on concrete floors or lean against concrete walls.
- Stay inside your home, building, or hard top automobile (not a convertible). Although you may be injured if lightning strikes your car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside. The steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal.
- Remember, rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires do not provide protection from lightning.
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.

- Close windows, blinds and curtains and secure outside doors. Until the storm has cleared stay away from windows and doors and off porches.
- Corded telephones are not safe and should only be used for emergency calls. Cordless and cellular telephones though are safe to use.
- Use your battery-operated radio for weather updates.

If you are: in a forest seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.

If you are: in an open area go to a low place such as a ravine or valley. Be alert for flash floods.

If you are: on open water get to land and find shelter immediately.

If you are: anywhere you feel your hair stand on end (which indicates that lightning is about to strike), squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. **DO NOT** lie flat on the ground.

AVOID:

- Natural lightning rods such as tall, isolated trees in an open area.
- Hilltops, open fields, beaches, or a boat on the water.
- Isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.
- Anything metal - tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf clubs, bicycles, etc.