

What are YOU gonna do about... A THUNDERSTORM?

Thunderstorms are very common... in fact, at any given moment, nearly 2,000 thunderstorms can be in progress over the face of the earth.

Lightning always comes with a thunderstorm since that is what causes the thunder. If you've ever heard someone say lightning never strikes the same place twice... WRONG! Lightning often strikes the same place several times during one storm.

Severe thunderstorms can also bring heavy rains, flooding, hail, strong winds, tornadoes and microbursts (a sudden vertical drop of air).

BEFORE A THUNDERSTORM:

Prepare - Review FLOOD, LIGHTNING, POWER LOSS and WIND MITIGATION at beginning of this Section.

Learn the buzzwords - Learn the terms / words used with thunderstorms...

- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch** - tells you when and where severe thunderstorms are possible
- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning** - severe thunderstorms have been spotted or are occurring

Watch for lightning - If you hear thunder, you're close enough to be struck by lightning - take cover as quickly as possible. Be aware that lightning often strikes miles away from the rainfall or thunderstorm cloud.

Unplug it - Unplug appliances if possible - even ones on a surge protector and it's best to move plugs away from outlets.

DURING A THUNDERSTORM:

Listen - Keep a battery-operated radio handy for local reports on storm (especially severe storms which could cause tornadoes.)

IF INDOORS - Stay inside until the storm passes.

- **Don't shower** - sounds weird, but wait since water can carry an electrical charge if lightning strikes near home
- **Avoid corded objects** - corded phones, PCs or a mouse

conduct electricity (could shock you). Cordless and cell phones or wireless devices are usually safe.

IF OUTDOORS - Try to get to safe shelter quickly.

- Move away from tall things (trees, towers, fences or power lines) and metal things (umbrellas, motorcycles or bicycles, wire fences, etc.) since they all attract lightning.
- If surrounded by trees, take shelter under the shorter trees.
- Get to a low lying area but watch out for flash floods.
- **Be small** - make yourself a small target by crouching down and put your hands on your knees (and don't lie flat on the ground since that makes you a bigger target!)

IF IN A BOAT - Get to land and to shelter quickly! Water is extremely dangerous when there's lightning.

IF IN A VEHICLE - Keep windows closed and stay out of a convertible, if possible (mainly since you may be the highest target if lightning strikes).

Hairy sign - If you feel your hair stand on end and feel tingly (which means lightning is about to strike)... crouch down and bend forward putting hands on your knees (be small), Don't lie flat on ground... makes a bigger target!

If someone is struck by lightning:

- Victim does not carry electrical charge - CAN be touched.
- Call 9-1-1 or local EMS (emergency) telephone number.
- Victim will have 2 wounds - an entrance and an exit burn (see *BURNS [Electrical]* in Section 3)

AFTER A THUNDERSTORM:

Things to avoid:

- **flooded areas** – stay away from flood waters since may be contaminated by oil, gas or raw sewage or electrically charged from underground or downed power lines or lightning – wait for authorities to say it's okay to return
- **moving water** – 6 inches (15 cm) can knock you off your feet and 2 ft (.6 m) can float a car
- **storm-damaged areas**
- **downed power lines**

Recovery tips - Review TIPS ON RECOVERING FROM A DISASTER at end of this Section.