How to Prepare and Safely Weather a Thunderstorm

Categories : Disaster Related

The following information is provided by the American Red Cross, FEMA and United States Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Thunderstorms and Lightening

All thunderstorms are dangerous! Every thunderstorm produces lightning. Associated dangers of thunderstorms include tornadoes, strong winds, hail and flash flooding.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch – Severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a severe thunderstorm warning is issued.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning – Severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property.

To prepare for a thunderstorm, you should do the following:

- Put together an emergency preparedness kit that includes food, water, battery-powered radio, sanitation and personal hygiene items, medications, flashlight, extra batteries, first aid supplies, copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, deed/lease to home, birth certificates, insurance policies), cell phone with chargers, family and emergency contact information and extra cash.
- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- Get inside a 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.
- Remember, rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires do not protect you from being struck by lightning. However, the steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal.
- Shutter windows and secure outside doors. If shutters are not available, close window blinds, shades or curtains.
- Unplug any electronic equipment well before the storm arrives.
- Protect your animals by ensuring that any outside buildings that house them are protected in the same way as your home.

If a thunderstorm and lightning are occurring in your area, you should:

- Listen to local news or battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates. Watch for signs of a storm, like darkening skies, lightning flashes or increasing wind.
- Avoid contact with corded phones. Use a corded telephone only for emergencies. Cordless and cellular telephones are safe to use.
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords.
- Avoid contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.

- Do not lie on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.
- Avoid natural lightning rods such as a tall, isolated tree in an open area
- Avoid hilltops, open fields, the beach or a boat on the water.
- Take shelter in a sturdy building. Avoid isolated sheds, picnic shelters, or other small structures in open areas.
- Avoid contact with anything metal – tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, glof clubs and bicycles.
- If you are driving, try to safely exit the roadway and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. Avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.

After a thunderstorm or lightning strike, you should:

- Never drive through a flooded roadway.
- Stay away from storm-damaged areas.
- Continue to listen to NOAA Weather Radio or to local radio and television stations for updated information or instructions.
- Help people who may require special assistance, such as infants, children and the elderly or disabled.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.
- Watch your animals closely. Keep them under your direct control.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND HANDLE POWER OUTAGES FOR MEDICAL DEVICES THAT REQUIRE ELECTRICITY. Go to:

http://www.fda.gov/downloads/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/UCM252812.pdf

Connecticut residents with mobile smartphones, Apple and Android devices, can download the CTPrepares App., to access emergency information and alerts, free of charge, during an emergency event. Services on the mobile application include creating an interactive emergency kit, developing a customized family communication plan, connect with utility companies, check weather reports, and have access to emergency preparation guides, so to be more informed during emergencies. Visit the CT.Gov Website: Emergency Management site at the following for more details and to sign up: http://portal.ct.gov/Emergency-Preparedness/

Power Outages:
Sudden power outages can be frustrating and troublesome, especially when they last a long time. If a power outage is 2 hours or less, you need not be concerned about losing your perishable foods. For prolonged power outages, though, there are steps you can take to minimize food loss and to keep all members of your household as comfortable as possible.

Keep food as safe as possible.

- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. First use perishable food from the refrigerator. An unopened refrigerator will keep foods cold for about 4 hours.
- Then use food from the freezer. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Use your non-perishable foods and staples after using food from the refrigerator and freezer.
- If it looks like the power outage will continue beyond a day, prepare a cooler with ice for your freezer items.
- Keep food in a dry, cool spot and keep it covered at all times.

Electrical equipment:

- Turn off and unplug all unneccesary electrical equipment, including sensitive electronics.
- Turn off or disconnect any appliances (like stoves), equipment or electronics you were using when the power went out. When power comes back on, surges or spikes can damage equipment.
- Leave one light on so you'll know when the power comes back on.

Using generators safely:

- When using a portable generator, connect the equipment you want to power directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a portable generator to a home's electrical system.
- If you are considering getting a generator, get advise from a professional, such as an electrician. Make sure that the generator you purchase is rated for the power that you think you need.
- Never use a generator, grill, camp stove or other gasoline, propane, natural gas or charcoal-burning devices inside a home, garage, basement, crawlspace or any partially enclosed area. Locate unit away from doors, windows, and vent that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

SOURCES: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), American Red Cross, and NOAA
PREPARED BY: 211/mm
CONTENT LAST REVIEWED: July2023