

## Severe Weather Response

Spring and summer are good times to review emergency response procedures for tornadoes and severe weather.

- The most frequent tornado occurrences are during the spring and summer months.
- An average of 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide each year.
- About 80 deaths and more than 1,500 injuries occur each year.
- Tornadoes are capable of tremendous destruction with wind speeds of 250 mph or more.
- They can be more than a mile wide and 50 miles long.
- Thunderstorms can occur year-round in any part of the country, often accompanied by lightning strikes.
- The best protection against severe weather is to check the weather forecast and stay aware of changing conditions. Cancelling plans or changing trips or activities is the best decision if the weather forecast calls for tornado conditions or other severe weather.

### General Response and Shelter

Everyone must be familiar with the severe weather warning signal and where the nearest shelter is located. It's very important to know how to respond before an event to reduce time delays that can be critical. Move to the nearest shelter immediately when you hear the warning signal and stay in the shelter until cleared to leave. Participate when attendance is taken so that everyone is accounted for.

### Tornadoes

Remember, a tornado warning and siren means that a funnel cloud has been spotted in your area. Don't wait. Move immediately to protect yourself in a shelter until the all clear is given.

If you are away from work, or don't know where to shelter then follow these basic precautions:

- Move away from exterior walls and windows.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a cubicle work surface or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter like a basement.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.

## Thunderstorms and lightning

If you are caught outside in a thunderstorm take the following precautions:

- Seek shelter indoors if possible, which can include buildings, shelters, or hard top vehicles. Don't stay in open spaces, open top vehicles, or open structures like gazebos.
- If you are caught outside, stay small by crouching down close to the ground. The Center for Disease Controls advocates that people not lie down as currents from lightning can travel some distance across ground surface. Crouching is the best practice if shelter can't be found.
- Separate from other people if you in a group to reduce the risk for one strike to injure several people.
- Don't stand near or in water as currents will carry some distance.
- Don't stand near tall structures that will attract lightning, like trees, towers, or poles. Trees can explode and hurl splinters and even a concrete wall in a building can conduct electricity from lightning.
- About 33% of lightning strike injuries each year occur indoors. If you are indoors, avoid showering, bathing, or water until the thunderstorm is over.
- Don't use electrical equipment that is connected to an outlet as lightning will travel through wires. This include phones with cords. Stay away from windows, doors, porches, and concrete parts of the building.
- Lightning can travel through concrete floors and walls, or through wires or metal in walls; stay away from these areas of the building until the storm passes.