



Family Preparedness: Severe Thunderstorms and Lightning

(Much of the information on this page is adapted from information provided by the NJ OEM.)

Severe Thunderstorms And Lightning: Read This First!

- What to do [Before a Thunderstorm](#)
 - Basic Preparedness
 - Listen for Severe Thunderstorm Watches and Warnings
 - Estimating the Distance of a Thunderstorm, and "The 30/30 Rule"
- What to do [During a Thunderstorm](#)
 - If You are Indoors
 - If You are Outdoors
 - If You are in a Car
- What to do [After a Thunderstorm](#)
 - If Someone is Struck by Lightning
 - After the Storm Passes

Severe Thunderstorms And Lightning: The Facts

Thunderstorms can occur **any time of year** in New Jersey. However, severe thunderstorms generally occur during the warmer months of **March through October**.

A typical thunderstorm is 15 miles in diameter and lasts an average of 30 minutes - far smaller than a hurricane or a winter storm. Despite their small size, however, **ALL thunderstorms are dangerous.**

Thunderstorms can produce **LIGHTNING, TORNADOES, STRONG WINDS, FLASH FLOODING** and **HAIL.**

LIGHTNING occurs with all thunderstorms. Each year, lightning causes an average of 67 fatalities nationwide. Many more are injured but survive with long-term, debilitating symptoms including memory loss, sleep disorders and muscle spasms.

TORNADOES produce winds in excess of 250 miles per hour. They can be a mile wide and stay on the ground over 50 miles. For more information see NJOEM's [Tornado Preparedness](#) page.

STRONG WINDS caused by a thunderstorm can exceed 100 mph and cause damage equal to a tornado. They can be extremely dangerous to aviation.

FLASH FLOODING is the number one cause of death associated with thunderstorms, causing more than 140 fatalities each year. For more information see NJOEM's [Flood and Flash Flood Preparedness](#) page.

HAIL causes more than \$1 billion in crop and property damage each year nationwide.

Of the estimated 100,000 thunderstorms that occur each year in the United States, **about 10 percent are classified as severe.** The National Weather Service considers a thunderstorm severe if it produces hail at least ¾-inch in diameter, winds of 58 mph or stronger, or a tornado.

Learn More

Follow these [Links](#) for much more information on preparedness and on the science of thunderstorms and lightning.