

Weather Safety Tips

Floods, thunderstorms, and tornadoes are severe weather hazards we face living in Texas. Every year lives are threatened or lost, and property is destroyed by severe weather events in our state.

Tornadoes pose the greatest severe weather risk to residents of Texas. With the season fast approaching it is time to prepare.

Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms give birth to tornadoes. It is important for everyone to know and understand the following terms:

“Severe Thunderstorm Watch”

- a. This means that severe thunderstorms are possible. Watch the sky and listen to the radio or television for more information.
- b. Be prepared to take shelter.

“Severe Thunderstorm Warning”

- a. This means that severe thunderstorms are occurring.
- b. Take shelter, turn on a battery operated radio or a battery operated television, and wait for the “all clear” announcement.

Before a thunderstorm hits know the following:

- a. Know the surrounding counties in which you live and work. This will help you track the approaching storm.
- b. Check the weather forecast before leaving for extended periods outdoors and postpone plans if severe weather is imminent,
- c. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers. Make sure children know how and when to call “911”.
- d. Choose an out of area contact that separated family members can call to report their whereabouts and conditions.
- e. Keep important documents and records in a safe place.
- f. Maintain a disaster supplies kit. (Flashlight, batteries, bottled water, etc.)

During the storm:

- a. Close all windows and doors.
- b. Draw the shades or blinds on all windows.
- c. Monitor the radio or television.
- d. Avoid using the telephone or other electrical appliances until the storm passes.
- e. Turn off air-conditioners.
- f. Delay taking baths or showers.
- g. If you are outdoors, seek shelter immediately.

Tornadoes

“Tornado Watch”

- a. This means that tornadoes are possible.
- b. Watch the sky and listen to the radio or television for more information.
- c. Be prepared to take shelter.
- d. If you see any revolving funnel shaped clouds, report them immediately by dialing **“911”**.

“Tornado Warning”

- a. This means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.
- b. **TAKE** shelter immediately.
- c. If you are in a vehicle, mobile home or portable classroom, move quickly to a strong building for shelter. If there is no shelter, lie flat in the nearest ditch or depression. Do not take shelter in a structure with a high, wide roof such as an auditorium, gym or shopping mall.
- d. Turn on a battery operated radio, or television, and wait for the “all clear” announcement.

Before the weather turns bad:

- a. Determine the best location in your home and workplace to seek shelter when threatened by a tornado.
- b. A basement or cellar will usually afford the best protection.
- c. If an underground shelter is not available, an interior room such as a bathroom or hallway on the lowest floor can provide some protection.
- d. Be aware of glass.
- e. Conduct periodic tornado drills with your family.
- f. Learn how to shut off the utilities to your home. Decide how and when your family will reunite.

When a Warning has been issued:

- a. Go to your predetermined shelter, and stay there until the danger has passed.
- b. Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls.
- c. Go to the center of the room.
- d. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris.
- e. Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table.
- f. Use sofa cushions or a bed mattress to protect your head and neck.
- g. If you are in a mobile home, seek shelter elsewhere immediately.
- h. Avoid places with wide span roofs such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, or larger hallways.

In multi-floor buildings or homes:

- a. Go to a small interior room, or hallway, on the lowest floor possible.

If you are outside:

- a. Find shelter on a substantial building.
- b. If shelter is not available or if there is no time to get inside, find a low-lying area. Lie in a ditch, culvert, or crouch near a strong building.
- c. Use your arms to protect your head and neck.

After a Tornado has passed:

- a. Monitor the radio and television for emergency information.
- b. Try and get out of damaged buildings. Do not enter them.
- c. Use telephones only for emergency calls.
- d. Take photos or videotape of the damage to your home or property.
- e. Check on neighbors/relatives who may require special assistance.
- f. If you are unaffected by the tornado, stay out of the damaged area until allowed in by officials.

Outdoor Warning Sirens

The civil defense sirens will be tested the first Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon, weather permitting. These sirens are designed to warn people who are “**OUTSIDE**” when danger is present, and they need to take cover immediately.

If the sirens sound at times other than the first Wednesday of each month, then either severe weather is heading our way, an enemy attack is imminent, or a malfunction happened.

Being prepared for severe storms and knowing what to do when a tornado strikes can save your life and the lives of your family.

Disaster Preparedness

Prepare for disaster before it strikes – assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit. Once disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can endure an evacuation or home confinement. Your kit should be stored in a convenient place known to everyone in your family. Keep a smaller version of your “disaster kit” in your vehicle. Most items should be kept in air tight plastic bags.

WATER

Store water in plastic containers, such as soft drink bottles, or buy bottled water. Avoid using containers that will decompose or break, such as milk cartons or glass bottles. A normally active person needs to drink at least two (2) quarts of water each day. Hot environment and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need more. Stored water should be changed every six (6) months to stay fresh. A good time to do this is when you change your clocks for daylight savings time.

FOOD

Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little to no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight. Food items should also be changed every 6 months.

Recommended non-perishable foods include:

- Ready to eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables
- Canned juices, milk, soup (if powdered, store more water)
- High energy foods: peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola and 'trail mix'
- Staples: sugar, salt, pepper
- Foods for infants, elderly, or persons with special diets
- Comfort/stress foods: cookies, hard candy, cereals, instant coffee, tea bags

FIRST AID KIT

Assemble a first aid kit for your home and for each vehicle you own. Your family physician or pharmacist should be consulted about storing prescription medications. A first aid kit should generally contain the following:

- Sterile adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes (Band-aids)
- Sterile Gauze Pads
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages
- Tweezers, scissors, and a needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic agent
- Petroleum jelly
- Thermometer
- Safety Pins
- Cleansing agent/soap
- Latex gloves
- Sunscreen
- Prescription drugs
- Non-prescription drugs (Aspirin, Antacid, Anti-diarrhea, Ipecac, Laxatives)
- Vitamins

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

A variety of tools and basic supplies are recommended to accompany your disaster kit:

- Emergency preparedness manual
- Flashlight with spare batteries
- Battery operated radio or TV with spare batteries
- Mess kits, plates, cups, plastic utensils
- Non-electric can opener
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Fire extinguisher (Small ABC Type)
- Duct tape
- Plastic sheeting
- Matches in waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers

- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles and thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench for household utilities
- Whistle
- Map of area (for locating shelters)
- Compass

CLOTHING AND BEDDING

Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person:

- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear
- Hats and gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses
- Blankets or sleeping bags

SPECIAL ITEMS

Remember family members with special needs, such as infants and elderly or disabled persons:

- Formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk, medications, pacifier
- Heart and high blood pressure medications, insulin, prescriptions, eye glasses, contact lenses and supplies, denture needs
- Entertainment items: books, games, magazines
- Important family documents in waterproof container
- Identification, passports, social security cards
- Bank account information
- Credit card numbers and companies
- Inventory of household valuables
- Pet food and supplies

Check your kit at least once a year. Replace old batteries and update clothing.