

Severe thunder and windstorms: Protecting yourself and others



Springtime boasts warmer weather, blossoming flora, and a general sense of rejuvenation after its frigid predecessor, winter. However, this change in season has a dark side in the form of extremely dangerous weather patterns. For the east coast of the United States, this coming Spring appears to have all the elements for an active and hazardous storm season.

Just last year, there were over 400 weather related fatalities making staying informed and prepared this year more important than ever. Knowing what to do leading up to, during, and after a serious storm can make the difference between life and death for yourself, family, loved ones, or pets.

What causes a storm?

All storms form from the same key ingredients: moisture, unstable air, and lift. They start when warm, moist air near the ground meet cold, dry air above. This mixture creates unstable air conditions, opening the door for the warmer and less dense air to lift higher into the atmosphere and clouds to form. The higher the warm air lifts, the taller the cloud. Now, the clouds consist of both upwards and downward winds, a combo that both fuels the storm while potentially creating rain, tornadoes, hail, or flooding down below.

What we are predicting

This spring, warm air coming up from the Gulf of Mexico will meet with the cold air coming down from Canada and make the conditions for serious thunderstorms and derechos (intense windstorms) all across the east coast ripe and imminent. These storms may include powerful winds above 50 miles per hour, lightning and hail, flash flooding, and even tornados.

Last time similar conditions presented themselves was back in 1993. This led to what would be known as the [Storm of the Century](#) and ended up being one of the deadliest and costly storms on record. There is much to learn from our past and utilize that knowledge to prepare for a comparable forecast.

How you can prepare

It is important to plan for the worst ahead of a dangerous weather. The more equipped are you for the unknown, the more peace of mind you can have leading up to a storm.

- **Sign up for your local warning system.** The [Emergency Alert System \(EAS\)](#) and [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\)](#) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts.

- **Cut down or trim trees** that could pose a threat to your home.
- **Identify sturdy buildings** near to where you live, work, or play.
- **Prepare your medications** and make sure you know how to store them in the case the power goes out.
- **Secure** outside furniture and protect windows.
- **Create a home safety kit.** We recommend:
 - Enough water for each person to have a gallon a day
 - Three-day supply of non-perishable food
 - Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
 - Flashlight
 - Whistle
 - First Aid Kit
 - Garbage bags
 - Towelettes
 - Phone chargers
 - Duct tape
 - Wrench or pliers
 - Local map
 - Manual can opener

[Learn more](#) about creating your own home safety kit.



What to do during the storm

Weathering a storm can be scary, but panicking will only make things worse. Keep you and your loved ones calm and safe for the duration of a storm by following these tips:

- **Be alert.** Stay up to date on the storm’s development and other dangers it could bring to where you live.
- **Stay in touch.** Reach out to friends and family to let everyone know you are safe.
- **Hold up in a safety room.** Make sure the space you choose to hunker down for the storm is window-free so that you can avoid flying glass. Bathrooms, basements, and closets are usually good choices.
- **Protect your property.** Unplug all appliances and electric devices.



Aftermath

Just because a storm is over does not mean you are out of the clear. Continue to be cautious as things get back to normal.

- **Watch your step.** Fallen power lines and trees can pose serious dangers. Report them to your power company immediately.
- **Listen to the experts.** Tune in to weather forecasts and announcements around whether it is safe to go back outside.
- **Don’t drink from the tap.** Wait until officials have tested the water and deemed it safe to drink.

While it is difficult to foresee exactly how a serious storm will affect where you live, taking them seriously and being precautious is the best thing you can do to keep yourself and loved ones safe. The more informed you are, the more prepared you will be and the calmer you will feel.