



While hurricanes pose a major threat to Pinellas County, there are any number of other potential disasters that threaten lives and property. From violent tornadoes to hazardous chemical spills, it is critical to know what to do when warnings are issued.

**Steps to take for all hazards:**

- Develop an emergency communications plan.
- Sign up to receive emergency information from the county through Alert Pinellas.
- Identify a meeting location should an incident

prevent you from getting home.

- Build a survival kit for all potential disasters.

- Locate a safe room you can retreat to in the event of severe weather events such as thunderstorms and tornadoes.



## THUNDERSTORMS & LIGHTNING



Thunderstorms are a common occurrence in Florida, especially during the summertime. The Sunshine State sees about 1.4 million lightning strikes in an average year and we lead the nation in lightning-related deaths. About 10 percent of thunderstorms are severe, with winds 58 mph or stronger and quarter-sized hail. Keep an eye on the weather forecast before you venture outdoors and heed nature's warning when you hear the sky start to rumble.

**SEEK SHELTER**

- Every thunderstorm produces lightning. If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike.
- Go inside or find shelter immediately.

- If you see lightning, count the seconds until you hear thunder: every five seconds means lightning is 1 mile away.

**When thunder roars, go indoors!**

**Safe Rooms:** Severe thunderstorms could produce wind strong enough to down trees and damage your home. See more about "safe rooms" below.

**AVOID ELECTRIC CONDUCTORS**

If you're indoors during a thunderstorm, stay away from anything that conducts electricity, such as corded phones, electrical appliances, computers, plumbing, metal doors and windows.

- Get off any elevated areas.
- Do not lie flat on the ground.

- Do not shelter under an isolated tree.
- Get as far away from water as possible.
- Stay away from objects that conduct electricity.

**If someone is struck by lightning**

Immediate medical attention can save a lightning victim's life. Call 9-1-1 and start CPR until medical crews arrive.



For additional information, visit [www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/other\\_hazards.htm](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/other_hazards.htm).

## TORNADOES



Tornadoes can form quickly during thunderstorms any time of year creating high velocity wind and blowing dangerous debris. In



Florida, the average warning time before a tornado hits is only 12 minutes. You may only have moments to make a life-or-death decision. Most tornado deaths occur at night when people are asleep and don't get the warning.

**WEATHER ALERTS**

A NOAA Weather Alert Radio and Wireless Emergency Alerts on your mobile device are especially critical for tornado warnings, which could be issued in the middle of the night.

**NOAA Weather Alert Radio:** When a warning is issued, these radios will emit a loud tone that will awaken you to take protective cover. Purchase one online or at local retailers.

**Wireless Emergency Alerts:** Many mobile networks provide free Wireless Emergency Alerts that will send a text alert in the event of an emergency. Learn more: [www.ready.gov/alerts](http://www.ready.gov/alerts).

**WATCHES vs. WARNINGS**

**Tornado Watch:** Tornadoes are possible in your area; monitor radio or TV reports for further developments.

**Tornado Warning:** A tornado has been sighted in your area. Proceed to safe shelter immediately.

**SAFE ROOMS**

Designate a safe room where you can stay during a tornado in your home, office or other places you

go frequently. Bathrooms or interior hallways are often good options.

- *Center of the building*
- *No windows*
- *Ground floor*

**Mobile Homes**

Mobile homes are not safe from the violent winds of a tornado. Identify a safe place you can go now, or plan to leave your home when tornadoes are possible.

**Vehicles**

Vehicles are easily overturned in a tornado, so get out and seek shelter in a sturdy building. Do not try to outrun or outmaneuver a tornado!

For additional tornado information, visit [www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/tornado.htm](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/tornado.htm).

**When a Tornado Warning goes in effect, put your safety plans in action.**

**At home:** Have all family members immediately proceed to your safe area such as a bathroom. If there is no bathroom on the lower level, and closets are inaccessible, a hallway may be your next best area of refuge. As a last resort, tip over a heavy piece of furniture, such as a couch or heavy chair, move it to the center of the room and take cover underneath.

**In a mobile home:** Mobile homes offer little resistance to tornado winds; hurricane straps or other tie-downs will not protect a mobile home from the wind



gusts associated with tornadoes.

You should plan on leaving your mobile home to seek shelter elsewhere. Most mobile home communities have a recreational building or laundry room which could offer safe haven. As a last resort, seek refuge in a ditch or culvert or other low lying area of ground.

**In your automobile:** Motor vehicles are easily overturned by tornado winds. Leave your vehicle and seek shelter in a sturdy building. As a last resort, seek shelter in a ditch or culvert. Do not try to outrun or outmaneuver a tornado! Use the time to seek appropriate shelter outside your vehicle.

**In office building, hotels, shopping centers:** Take shelter in an interior hallway on a lower floor. A closet, bathroom or other small room with short, stout walls will give some protection from collapse and flying debris. Otherwise, get under heavy furniture and stay away from windows. A corner area, away from a window, is safer than the middle of a wide span wall.

**In schools:** All public schools have reliable ways to monitor tornado watches and warnings, and each school has a designated emergency plan that will lead students and faculty to designated safe areas. Students should stay away from glass, both in windows and doors. They should crouch down and seek shelter under a classroom desk, if possible.

**In theaters, warehouses, auditoriums:** Move quickly to a small interior room such as a rest room or closet. Otherwise, evacuate these buildings and seek shelter in nearby sturdy buildings, if time permits.

**Out in open:** When severe weather approaches, seek inside shelter immediately. The chances of encountering falling trees, downed power lines and lightning is far greater than encountering a tornado itself. If a tornado approaches, lie flat in the nearest depression, such as a culvert or ditch, and cover your head with your arms.