

# OTHER HAZARDS



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

*in this section*

- **Seek shelter**
- **Avoid electrical conductors**
- **If you're stuck outdoors...**



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. Learn more in the TORNADO section about how to locate your home's safe room.

## 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.

## IF YOU'RE STUCK OUTDOORS...

- 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.



# TORNADOES

*in this section*

- **Weather alerts**
- **Watches vs. Warnings**
- **Safe rooms**



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.



## 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)

**Alert Pinellas:** Dangerous weather warnings can also be sent to any phone lines or devices you register with Pinellas County's *Alert Pinellas* emergency notification service: [www.pinellascounty.org/alertpinellas](http://www.pinellascounty.org/alertpinellas)

## 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, such as a clubhouse, 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!

