

Thunderstorm & Lightning: Do's and Don'ts

If at home or work

Preparation

- Look for darkening skies and increased wind.
- If you hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning.
- Keep monitoring local media for updates and warning instructions.
- Stay indoors and avoid travel if possible.
- Close windows and doors, and secure objects outside your home (e.g. furniture, bins, etc.).
- Ensure that children and animals are inside.
- Unplug unnecessary electrical appliances (to isolate them from the main power supply which may conduct a power surge during a lightning storm).
- Remove tree timber or any other debris that may cause a flying accident.

Response

- Avoid taking a bath or a shower, and stay away from running water. This is because lightning can travel along metal pipes.
- Keep away from doors, windows, fireplaces, stoves, bathtubs, or any other electrical conductors.
- Avoid using corded phones and other electrical equipment that can conduct lightning.

If Outdoor

Response

- Go to safe shelter immediately – avoid metal structures and constructions with metal sheeting.
- Ideally, find shelter in a low-lying area and make sure that the spot chosen is not likely to flood.
- Crouch down with feet together and head down to make yourself a smaller target.
- Hair standing up on the back of your neck could indicate that lightning is imminent.
- Do not lie flat on the ground; this will make a bigger target.
- Keep away from all utility lines (phone, power, etc.), metal fences, trees, and hilltops.
- Do not take shelter under trees as this conduct electricity.
- Rubber-soled shoes and car tyres do not offer protection from lightning.

If travelling

Response

- Get off bicycles, motorcycles or farm vehicles that may attract lightning.
- Get to a safe shelter.
- If boating or swimming, get to land as quickly as possible and take shelter.
- During a storm, remain in your vehicle until help arrives or the storm has passed (the metal roof will provide protection if you are not touching metal inside); windows should be up; park away from trees and power lines.

Treatment

- Take the person who is struck by lightning to a hospital.
- If possible, give basic First Aid.
- People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge and can be handled safely.
- Check for broken bones, loss of hearing and eyesight.
- A victim of a lightning strike can suffer varying degrees of burn. Check the impact point and where the electricity left the body for injury marks.