

DuPage County Environmental, Safety, Health & Property Loss Control Program Lightning and Tornado Precautions for Field Personnel

Purpose: To provide County employees that drive or work in the field safety precautions in event of Tornado and Lightning weather.

Tornado: If a tornado "**watch**" is issued for your area, it means that a tornado is "possible."

(Employees shall be contacted by dispatch/supervisors to ensure they are aware of the watch)

If a tornado "**warning**" is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been spotted, or is strongly indicated on radar, and it is time to go to a safe shelter immediately

(On campus, follow campus-wide instructions. Off campus, seek shelter until warning expires. Dispatch/supervisors shall contact field personnel)

Departments' home base dispatch shall contact field employees and drivers when tornado watches or warnings are upgraded or downgraded.

Employees and drivers should be aware of changing weather conditions in their vicinity and notify their dispatch.

The following can be signs of an impending tornado:

- A sickly greenish or greenish black color to the sky.
- If there is a watch or warning posted, then the fall of hail should be considered as a real danger sign. Hail can be common in some areas, however, and usually has no tornado activity along with it.
- A strange quiet that occurs within or shortly after a thunderstorm.
- Clouds moving by very fast, especially in a rotating pattern or converging toward one area of the sky.
- A sound a little like a waterfall or rushing air at first, but turning into a roar as it comes closer. The sound of a tornado has been likened to that of both railroad trains and jets.
- Debris dropping from the sky.
- An obvious "funnel-shaped" cloud that is rotating, or debris such as branches or leaves being pulled upwards, even if no funnel cloud is visible.

If you see a tornado and it is not moving to the right or to the left relative to trees or power poles in the distance, it may be moving towards you! Remember that although tornadoes usually move from southwest to northeast, they also move towards the east, the southeast, the north, and even northwest.

If caught in the open, you should seek a safe place immediately:

The chances of encountering falling trees, power lines, and lightning is greater than encountering the tornado itself.

The basement of a sturdy building would be best, but lying flat in a ditch or low-lying area may be the only thing available. A culvert in a ditch may be a good choice if there is no rain, but if there is rain, flash flooding may be more dangerous and likely than the tornado.

Avoid shelter in buildings with large spans such as gyms, large retail stores.

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If there is no basement go to interior rooms and halls on the lowest floor, but avoid halls that open to the outside in any direction. Stay away from glass, both in windows and doors. Crouch down, and make as small a "target" as possible. If you have something to cover your head, do so, otherwise, use your hands.

If you are in a car, and you can see a tornado forming or approaching, you should leave the car and take shelter in a basement of a building or a ditch. If forced into a ditch for cover go away from the vehicle to avoid it should it roll over into the ditch. You may think you can escape from the tornado by driving away from it, but you can't know what you may be driving into! A tornado can blow a car off a road, pick a car up and hurl it, or tumble a car over and over. Many people have been killed in cars while they were trying to outrun the tornado, and although it is sometimes possible to escape, it is generally not a good idea.

An underpass may seem like a safe place, but may not be. While videos show people surviving under an underpass, those tornadoes have been weak. No one knows how survivable an underpass is in a strong or violent tornado. The debris flying under the underpass could be very deadly... head for a ditch.

Lightning: Lightning strikes injure and kill hundreds each year.

Lightning Facts:

- Lightning can travel at speeds of 100,000 mph
- Lightning can spread as far as 60 feet after striking the ground
- Temperature of a bolt of lightning can be as high as 50,000 degrees F
- Lightning can contain 200,000 Volts or more
- Can contain 25,000 Amperes
- Lightning can strike the same place twice
- A person struck by lightning DOES NOT retain an electric charge that can shock you

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Here are some precautions to help keep you safe:

- ✓ As soon as you hear thunder, shut off equipment and move indoors. The cab of a metal topped vehicle provides some protection from a lightning strike but an enclosed building provides better protection.
- ✓ Alert your dispatch you are taking shelter.

If you can't take cover inside:

- ✓ Get to a low space
- ✓ Keep away from lone trees or towers, fences, telephone poles and under power lines
- ✓ Keep away from streams or other bodies of water
- ✓ Keep away from metal objects, umbrellas, wire fences
- ✓ Do Not lay flat on the ground, you want to minimize contact with the ground
- ✓ Crouch down on the balls of your feet, place your hands on your knees and lower your head between your knees

If someone is struck by lightning:

- ✓ Call 911
- ✓ If not breathing begin CPR
- ✓ If breathing cut away burned clothing and apply water to the burns, preferably as cold as possible and keep applying until medics arrive