THUNDERSTORM/LIGHTNING SAFETY

More people are killed in the U.S. by LIGHTNING each year than by tornadoes and hurricanes.

An Approaching Thunderstorm:

When to Seek Safe Shelter

Lightning can strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain area in a thunderstorm. That's about the distance you can hear thunder. When a storm is 10 miles away, it may even be difficult to tell a storm is coming.

IF YOU CAN HEAR THUNDER, YOU ARE WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE. SEEK SAFE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY!

The first stroke of lightning is just as deadly as the last. If the sky looks threatening, take shelter **before** hearing thunder.

Use the "30-30 rule" where visibility is good and there is nothing obstructing your view of the thunderstorm. When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within 6 miles of you and is dangerous. Seek shelter immediately. The threat of lightning continues for much longer period than most people realize. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder before leaving shelter. Don't be fooled by sunshine or blue sky!

If it is cloudy or objects are obscuring your vision, get inside immediately. It is always safer to take precautions than to wait.

Lightning Safety Rules:

Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are imminent. This is your best way to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.

Move to a sturdy building or hardtop car/truck. Do not take shelter in small sheds, under isolated trees, or in convertible automobiles. Stay away from tall objects such as towers, fences, telephone poles, and power lines.

If lightning is occurring and a sturdy shelter is not available, get inside a hard top automobile and keep the windows up. Avoid touching any metal.

Utility lines and metal pipes can conduct electricity. Indoors, unplug appliances not necessary for obtaining weather information. Avoid using the telephone or any electrical appliances. Use phones ONLY in an emergency. Don't wear wired stereo/computer headphones.

Turn off air conditioners. Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage.

During a thunderstorm, don't wash dishes or wash your hands, and don't take a bath/shower.

If you are outdoors and can't get to a shelter, find an open, low spot away from trees, fencing, and poles. **Crouch down**, keeping twice as far away from a tree as it is tall. Be the lowest point. Lightning hits the tallest object. Don't even be the second tallest object during a lightning storm! In an exposed area, **do the "lightning squat"!** Crouch down, feet together, hands on knees or over your ears. Make sure the place you pick to shelter/squat isn't subject to flooding. Lightning can strike the water and travel some distance away from its point of contact. Don't stand in puddles of water, even if wearing rubber boots.

Avoid metal! Stay away from clothes lines, fences, and metal sheds or other elevated objects. Don't hold on to metal items such golf clubs, tennis rackets, tools, or bikes. Large metal objects can conduct lightning. Small metal objects can cause burns.

Move away from a group of people. Stay at least several yards away from other people. Don't share a bleacher bench or huddle in a group.

SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY KIT

Be Prepared At Home before Severe Weather Strikes
If you're living off-campus, a severe storm can knock out utility services to your area, leaving you without electricity, heat, water or fresh food. It's a good idea to put together an emergency kit you can grab at a moment's notice *(or store it in the "protective area" in your house you plan to use during severe weather.)*
Be sure to store your emergency kit in a waterproof container.
*(Remember to check your kit **semi-annually**. Suggested: At **daylight savings time change**, when you replace your home smoke detector batteries!)*

Flashlight and **extra** batteries *(Check batteries semi-annually!)*
Battery-operated radio with a weather band
First aid kit with essential medicines and a manual
A large jug of drinking water
Non-perishable, ready-to-eat food
Towels, toilet paper and bathroom items
A spare pair of shoes *(that give some protection from broken glass and broken wood fragments)*
Work gloves
Duct tape
Credit cards
A copy of insurance documents
Blankets and sleeping gear *(both for flying-debris protection and comfort)*
List of phone numbers and addresses of emergency services and protective areas, physicians, family and friends.

Stock the kit with spare home tools that you may need:
Hammer and nails
A pocket multi-tool
Screwdrivers, pliers and wrenches
Small pry-bar
Make sure everyone in your family knows where the kit is kept. Be sure and store your severe weather emergency kit in the protected area where you plan to seek shelter from storms! Review your emergency plan with your family and post the written plan.

Common Sense Note: Candles and matches in your kit might be great for use during a simple storm-related power outage blackout, but their use could be hazardous where actual storm damage to your apartment/house has caused gas leaks. Use with care!
Additional ideas for disaster emergency kits can be found, online on the Internet, at http://www.ready.gov/america/index.html and at the American Red Cross website "make a kit" webpage.
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If possible, **take your cell PHONE with you** when you seek refuge!