



The District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency

WE LEAD • WE COORDINATE • WE PLAN • WE PREPARE • WE ALERT

BE PREPARED FOR SEVERE SPRING WEATHER

Be weather-ready by preparing for severe spring weather. Between March and May, the most common weather hazards that affect the District and surrounding jurisdictions are thunderstorms, lightning, tornadoes, and floods. Taking preparedness actions before disasters or emergencies occur can save lives and protect property anywhere.

During a Thunderstorm with Lightning:

Know Your Risk – Every thunderstorm produces lightning, which kills more people each year than tornadoes or hurricanes. Heavy rain from thunderstorms can cause flash flooding, and high winds can damage homes and blow down trees and utility poles, causing widespread power outages.

Understand National Weather Service terms:

- **Thunderstorm Watch** – Means severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a severe thunderstorm warning is issued.
- **Thunderstorm Warning** – Means severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property.

Take Action –

- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- Unplug any electronic equipment well before the storm arrives.
- Use your battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio for updates from local officials.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.

During a Tornado:

Know Your Risk – Tornadoes are the most violent of all storms. Stay alert to these danger signs:

- Severe thunderstorms with strong, gusty winds
- A dark, funnel-shaped cloud that extends from the sky to the ground
- A roaring sound. Remember: *When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.*

Understand National Weather Service Terms:

- **Tornado Watch** - Means conditions are favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms capable of producing tornadoes.
- **Tornado Warning** – Means go immediately under ground to a basement, storm cellar or an interior room (closet, hallway or bathroom).

Take Action - Remain aware. Monitor local radio and television broadcasts.

- If you are outside and cannot reach a safe building, avoid high ground; water; tall, isolated trees; and metal objects such as fences or bleachers. They are NOT safe.
- If inside avoid electrical equipment and corded telephones. Cordless phones, cell phones, and other wireless handheld devices are safe to use.
- Keep away from windows.

Understanding the Dangers of Flooding:

Know Your Risk - Flooding typically occurs when prolonged rain falls over several days, when intense rain falls over a short period of time, or when an ice or debris jam causes a river or stream to overflow onto the surrounding area.

Understand National Weather Service terms:

- **Flood Watch** – Means “Be aware” because conditions are right for flooding to occur in your area.
- **Flood Warning** – Means “Take action!” because flooding is either happening or will happen shortly.

Flooding Dangers and More Information:

- The most common cause of flooding is water due to rain and/or snowmelt that accumulate faster than soils can absorb it or rivers can carry it away.
- Over half of all flood-related drowning’s occur when a vehicle is driven into hazardous flood water.
- Throughout the National Capital Region causes of flash flooding include heavy rain, ice or debris jams, and levee or dam failure.
- Some floods develop slowly, while others such as flash floods, can develop in just a few minutes and without visible signs of rain
- Flood-hazard maps have been created to show the flood risk for your community, which helps determine the type of flood insurance coverage you will need since standard homeowners insurance does not cover flooding.

Take Action - Most flood-related deaths and injuries could be avoided if people who come upon areas covered with water followed this simple advice: *Turn Around Don't Drown*.

- Stay tuned to your local news for updated information on road conditions.
- Do not drive into flooded roadways or around a barricade. Repeat the advice above: *Turn Around, Don't Drown*. A vehicle caught in swiftly moving water can be swept away in a matter of seconds.
- Twelve inches of water can float a car or small SUV, and 18 inches of water can carry away large vehicles.
- Ensure water is safe to drink, cook or clean with after a flood. Oftentimes a boil water order is put in place following a flood.
- Use local alerts and warning systems to get information and expert informed advice as soon as available.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.

Knowing the answers to these questions ahead of time can save your life.

- Is your home, business or school in a floodplain?
- Where is water likely to collect on the roadways you most often travel?
- What is the fastest way to get to higher ground?



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