

## PortageOhio Prepares

Prepare • Survive • Thrive

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What is the difference between a WATCH and a WARNING?

### Severe thunderstorm watch:

- Tells when and where a thunderstorm is likely to occur.

### Severe thunderstorm warning:

- Issued when severe weather has been spotted. Indicates immediate danger to life and property.



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# Portage Prepares

Helping Portage County Citizens prepare for emergencies and disasters.

2013

## Thunderstorm/Lightning Facts & Safety Tips

Summertime is the peak season for one of the nature's deadliest weather events - lightning.

Lightning is an electric current that is made by a thunderstorm. Thunder is caused by lightning.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), the United States has a 10-year average of 44 fatalities annually due to lightning strikes.

The NWS reported that 34 people died of lightning strikes in 2009. The incidents occurred in 22 states and Puerto Rico. Ohio reported no deaths caused by lightning last year.

### Fact:

You can see lightning before you hear thunder because light travels faster than sound.

### Fact:

Lightning can be seen up to 100 miles away.

### Fact:

Lightning can strike the same place twice.



**When  
Thunder  
Roars  
Go Indoors!**

**Lightning Safety Week**, promoted by the National Weather Service, is conducted each year during the last full week of June. The purpose of this week is to help safeguard people from the hazards of lightning and to lower deaths and injuries caused by lightning strikes.

Other associated dangers of thunderstorms include tornadoes, strong winds, hail and flash flooding.

## Shelter from Thunder and Lightning Storms

A house or other substantial building offers the best protection from lightning. For a shelter to provide adequate protection from lightning, it must contain a mechanism for conducting the electrical current from the point of contact to the ground. These mechanisms may be on the outside of the structure, or contained within the walls of the structure, or a combination of the two. On the outside, lightning can travel along the outer shell of the building or follow metal gutters and downspouts to the ground. Inside, lightning can follow conductors such as electrical wiring, plumbing and telephone lines to the ground.



### Lightning Safety when Outdoors:

- If you are in an open area, move to a low place such as a ravine or valley.
- If you are in open water, get to land and find shelter immediately.
- If you are in a heavily wooded area, seek shelter under a thick growth of small trees.

FEMA & National Weather Service

For more information on thunderstorms, lightning, or severe weather, go to :

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
or  
[www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)

### Watch for Developing Thunderstorms

Thunderstorms are most likely to develop on spring or summer days but can occur year round. As the sun heats the air, pockets of warmer air start to rise and cumulus clouds form. Continued heating can cause these clouds to grow vertically into towering cumulus clouds, often the first sign of a developing thunderstorm.



### Seek shelter before and approaching thunder-storm

Lightning can strike as far as 10 miles away from where it is raining. That's about the distance you can hear thunder. If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance. Seek shelter immediately!

### Minimize the risk of being struck during outdoor activities

Most lightning deaths and injuries occur in the summer. During organized outdoor sporting events, coaches, camp counselors and other adults must stop activities at the first clap of thunder to ensure that everyone

has time to get to a large building or enclosed vehicle. Leaders of outdoor events should have a written emergency plan that all staff are aware of and enforce.



### Protect Your Pets

Outside dog houses are not lightning-safe. Dogs that are chained to trees or wire runners can easily fall victim to lightning strikes. Consider bringing your pets inside the home or garage during thunderstorms.

## Unsafe Sheltering

Unless specifically designed to be lightning safe, small structures do little, if anything to protect people from lightning. Many small, open shelters on golf courses, parks and athletic fields are designed to protect people from rain and sun, but not lightning. A shelter that does not contain plumbing or wiring throughout, or some other mechanism for grounding from the roof to the ground is not safe. Small wooden, vinyl or metal sheds offer little or no protection from lightning and should be avoided during thunderstorms.



Portage Prepares is a county education program for preparing Portage County communities to meet the challenges of emergencies and/or disasters in order to be safe and reduce injury. Portage Prepares is a program of the Portage County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and its Advisory Committee under the guidance of the Portage County Board of Commissioners. For additional information on emergency preparedness, go to our website at: [www.co.portage.oh.us/portageprep/](http://www.co.portage.oh.us/portageprep/) or follow us on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/PortagePrepares](https://www.facebook.com/PortagePrepares) or follow us on Twitter @PortagePrep.