

All about lightning

Late spring and early summer in Illinois means increased risk of severe storms. For many, tornadoes come to mind first. But lightning causes more deaths in the U.S. than tornadoes, floods, or hurricanes. You may have questions about lightning such as: Can I wash dishes during a storm? Can I use my cellphone? Where should I go to seek shelter? What should I do if I am outside? Read on to learn the answers to these questions and more.

Risk of being struck by lightning: About 300 people are struck by lightning each year – about 50 of those are killed, usually from heart attack. The risk is higher in certain regions such as Florida and Texas. In Illinois, about two – three people die and about eight are seriously injured from lightning annually. People who work outside are also at higher risk. Other injuries that can be caused by lightning include: blunt trauma, neurological syndromes, muscle injuries, eye injuries, skin lesions, and burns.

How to protect yourself from lightning: Take the following actions during thunderstorms:

- Do not use corded phones. Cellphones and cordless phones are safe.
- Stay away from electronic equipment and electric cords.
- Do not use computers or electronic equipment.
- Stay away from water and plumbing. This includes showers and washing dishes or your hands.
- Do not lay or lean on concrete floors or walls
- Keep away from windows and doors.
- If you are outside – seek safe shelter immediately. A safe shelter has four walls and a roof. Examples include a house, office building or shopping mall. A vehicle with all windows rolled up can also be safe. Do not touch the metal parts of a car if seeking shelter there.
- Stay off of porches and balconies.
- Do not lay on the ground or get under a tree.
- Stay inside for at least 30 minutes after you last hear thunder.

Myths about lightning: Here are some things people think they know about lightning that is wrong (and being wrong could mean getting struck by lightning):

- Lightning never strikes in the same place twice: This is wrong! Lightning can strike in the same place more than once.
- You can only be struck by lightning if it is raining: This is wrong! Lightning often strikes outside areas of rain, and can strike as far as 10 miles away from rainfall. If you can hear thunder, you can be hit by lightning.

Learn more: Check out these sites to learn more about lightning:

[Lightning FAQs](#)

[Lightning first aid](#)

[Lightning safety when working outdoors](#)

[Lightning in Illinois](#)