

# THUNDERSTORM

Thunderstorms are frequent occurrences during the summer months in southeast Louisiana. Taking proper precautions can reduce injury.

**"ELECTRICAL STORM"** - Popular term for thunderstorm. Sometimes applied to a relatively rare condition of disturbed atmospheric electric field in the lower atmosphere that arises when strong winds are blowing and much dust is in the air, but there is no thunderstorm activity. Electrification due to the blowing dust may charge fences and other metallic objects to such an extent that slight shocks are felt upon touch.

**THUNDERSTORM** - A local storm (accompanied by lightning and thunder) produced by a cumulonimbus cloud, usually with gusty winds, heavy rain, and sometimes hail. Non-severe thunderstorms rarely have lifetimes over two hours. A typical, non-severe thunderstorm life cycle consists of three stages: (1) CUMULUS STAGE-- warm, moist air rises (updraft) and condenses into tiny water droplets which make up the visible cloud. (2) MATURE STAGE-- the cloud grows above the freezing level; precipitation forms and becomes heavy enough to fall back to earth. This precipitation generates cool air which also sinks back to earth with the precipitation. (3) DISSIPATION STAGE-- Cool rain and downdraft spread throughout the storm replacing the updraft which is the lifeblood of the thunderstorm. The visible cumulonimbus cloud becomes softer in appearance, less distinctly outlined or "fuzzy" and dissipates, sometimes leaving only the high anvil cloud, as the storm rains itself out.

**SEVERE THUNDERSTORM** - A thunderstorm that goes from the mature stage to the severe stage before dissipating. Severe thunderstorms are most efficient "machines" because the updraft remains strong for a long time. They also occasionally contain rotations on a broad scale. Because of its structure, the severe storm may last for hours beyond the lifetime of a normal thunderstorm while producing large hail, high winds, torrential rain, and possible tornadoes. Officially, a thunderstorm is classified as severe if 50 knot (58 MPH) winds are measured, 3/4 inch or larger hail occurs, or funnel clouds or tornadoes develop.

## Before Thunderstorms and Lightning:

- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage during a severe thunderstorm.
- Remember the 30/30 lightning safety rule: Go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

## Avoid the following:

- Natural lightning rods such as a tall, isolated tree in an open area
- Hilltops, open fields, the beach, or a boat on the water
- Isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas
- Anything metal—tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, and bicycles

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

**City of Kenner   Office of Emergency Management   (504) 471-2100**  
**[OEM@KENNER.LA.US](mailto:OEM@KENNER.LA.US)**

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## If a Thunderstorm Threatens Your Area:

- Postpone outdoor activities.
- Get inside a home, building, or hard top automobile (not a convertible). Although you may be injured if lightning strikes your car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside.
- Remember, rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning. However, the steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal.
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- Shutter windows and secure outside doors. If shutters are not available, close window blinds, shades, or curtains.
- Avoid showering or bathing. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- Use a corded telephone only for emergencies. Cordless and cellular telephones are safe to use.
- Unplug appliances and other electrical items such as computers and turn off air conditioners. Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage.
- Use your battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio for updates from local officials.

## During a Thunderstorm:

If you are:	TAKE THIS ACTION:
In a forest	<b>Seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.</b>
In an open area	<b>Go to a low place such as a ravine or valley.</b> Be alert for flash floods.
On open water	<b>Get to land and find shelter immediately.</b>
Anywhere you feel your hair stand on end (which indicates that lightning is about to strike)	<b>Squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet.</b> Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. DO NOT lie flat on the ground.

## After a Thunderstorm:

Call 9-1-1 for medical assistance as soon as possible for anyone struck by lightning.

The following are things you should check when you attempt to give aid to a victim of lightning:

- Breathing - if breathing has stopped, begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- Heartbeat - if the heart has stopped, administer CPR.

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- Pulse - if the victim has a pulse and is breathing, look for other possible injuries. Check for burns where the lightning entered and left the body. Also be alert for nervous system damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing and eyesight.

## Marine Advisory Terms

**Special Marine Warning:** Issued for a brief/sudden occurrence of sustained wind or frequent gusts greater than 34 knots, usually associated with thunderstorms.

MARINE ADVISORY	DESCRIPTION
<b><i>Small Craft Advisory:</i></b>	25-38 mph or 22-33 kt winds sustained at least 1 minute Seas up to 7' within 12 hours
<b><i>Gale Warning:</i></b>	39-54 mph or 37-47 kt winds
<b><i>Storm Warning:</i></b>	55-73 mph or 48-63 kt winds

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