

Spring Safety

Lt. Catherine Harman

Spring comes with some very warm temperatures and it brought many of us out with our bikes, roller blades, skateboards and motorized scooters. It is very important that we also have some safety equipment while engaging in these activities to prevent injuries. So let's review some of the equipment we need in order to continue our activities safely throughout the Spring and Summer months. EVERYONE riding a bicycle should wear an age appropriate bicycle helmet. This can prevent head injuries and even possibly save your life or that of a loved one. Bicycle helmets are available at local sporting good stores as well as department stores. Some insurance plans offer discounts towards the purchase of safety equipment. In addition to the bicycle, helmets should be worn on any motorized recreational equipment, skateboarding and while roller-blading. Other safety equipment such as wrist guards, kneepads, and elbow pads are recommended. This equipment offers some protection to the frequently injured joints on the body common to these types of activities. The term an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure applies here. Let's all be sure to use our safety equipment so that we can avoid spending time in an emergency department and sidelined during the summer while injuries heal.

Let's also review some fire safety issues specific to the warmer weather. First and foremost there is no outside burning permitted in Wayne County outside of the Bar-B-Q for the purpose of cooking. This means that outside fire pits and the stoves are not permitted. Not only are they a nuisance for neighbors trying to enjoy the warmer weather, they pose several hazards. If we are experiencing a dry summer the embers from an outside burn can travel and ignite combustible materials such as dry brush or trash. The result could be a fire that can in turn involve a structure fire. If such a fire should occur and detection is delayed the damage is greater and so is the danger to any occupants and the fire fighters involved in fighting the fire. In addition to the possibility of fire it is important to recognize that some serious bodily injuries can occur. Outside fires are an attraction not only for adults but children as well. Children and adults have been burned due to falls into a fire pit, and pouring a flammable liquid onto materials thought to be out. The results have been some very serious burns and the loss of life. Burns are very painful, have the potential for infection and leave permanent scars. Burns take a long time to heal and often require several surgeries and physical therapy in order for the victim to resume normal activities.

Spring and summer will soon be here so let's all be safe and stay healthy.

Severe Weather Awareness

Fire Chief Bill Forbush and the National Weather Service

THUNDERSTORM SAFETY

Lightning, one of nature's most spectacular wonders, is also one of its most deadly and common sights. It is estimated that lightning strikes the earth 100 times each second!

Deaths and injuries from lightning can be avoided if people take the proper precautions. One important thing to remember, all thunderstorms produce lightning.

If lightning threatens, move indoors. Once inside, avoid doors, windows, and metal objects. Avoid using electrical appliances. Use the telephone only in an emergency.

If driving, stay in your automobile. An enclosed automobile offers reasonably good protection from lightning.

Outdoors, stay away from isolated trees. If your hair stands on end or your skin tingles, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down quickly and make a low target.

Thunderstorms also can produce strong wind gusts. These straight-line winds have been known to reach 100 miles an hour. For this reason, you should treat severe thunderstorms just as you would tornadoes. Move to appropriate shelter if in the path of the storm.

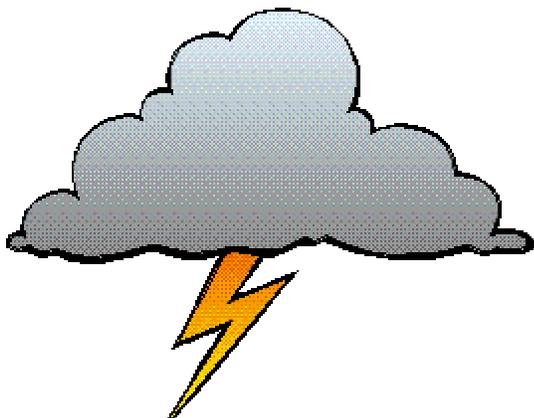
The strong outrush of wind from a thunderstorm is often called a downburst. One of the primary causes is rain cooled air. The rain cooled air accelerates downward rapidly producing a potentially damaging gust of wind.

Strong downbursts are often mistaken for tornadoes. They can produce extensive damage and are often accompanied by a roaring sound similar to a tornado. Downbursts can easily overturn mobile homes, tear roofs off houses, and topple trees.

TORNADO SAFETY

TORNADO! The very word strikes fear in many people. While a tornado is perhaps nature's most destructive storm, deaths and injuries can be prevented. By following Tornado Safety Rules, lives can be saved and injuries prevented.

Warning the public of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes is the National Weather Service's (NWS) most important job. To help the public prepare for tornado situations, the NWS has adopted a WATCH and WARNING program.



TORNADO WATCH: This means that conditions are favorable for tornado development. This is the time to prepare. You should keep alert by listening

to NOAA Weather Radio, or the commercial media for the latest weather information.

TORNADO WARNING: This means a tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar. People in the path of the storm should take immediate life saving action.

IN SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, FACTORIES, SHOPPING CENTERS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES: Move to designated shelter areas. Interior hallways on the lowest level are usually best. Stay away from windows and out of auditoriums, gymnasiums, or other structures with large free span roofs. Garden City Schools are equipped with special radio receivers that alert officials to severe weather watches and warnings so that they can take appropriate action.

IN VEHICLES: Do not try to outrun a tornado. Abandon your vehicle and hide in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head.

Tornado Myths

MYTH: Areas near rivers, lakes and mountains are safe from tornadoes.

FACT: No place is safe from tornadoes. They can cross rivers, travel up mountains, and roar through valleys.

MYTH: Low pressure with a tornado causes buildings to "explode" as the tornado passes overhead.

FACT: Violent winds and debris slamming into buildings cause most damage.

MYTH: Windows should be opened before a tornado to equalize pressure and minimize damage.

FACT: Opening windows allows damaging winds to enter the structure. Leave the windows alone; instead immediately go to a safe place.



TORNADO SAFETY IN YOUR HOME



WITH BASEMENT

Basement is the safest place

- Avoid windows and chimneys
- Hide under furniture or stairwells



SPLIT-LEVEL

- Cover your head
- Seek lowest level
- Central section
- Hide under furniture or stairwells
- Avoid windows and chimneys
- Cover your head



WITHOUT BASEMENT

- Lowest level
- Central portion of home
Small room, closet or hallway
- Avoid exterior walls and windows
- Cover your head



MULTI-FAMILY

- Seek lowest level, if available
- Central portion of building
Small room, closet or hallway
- Avoid exterior walls and windows
- Cover your head



MOBILE HOMES

- Evacuation is a must
- Seek shelter in a nearby permanent building
- If not available, head for a low spot such as a ditch or ravine
- Cover your head

Tornado Awareness

Tornadoes are relatively short-lived local storms. They are composed of violently rotating columns of air that descend in the familiar funnel shape from thunderstorm cloud systems. The weather conditions that tend to generate Tornadoes are unseasonably warm and humid earth surface air, cold air at middle atmospheric levels, and strong upper-level jet stream winds. Tornadoes can occur anywhere in the United States during any month of the year. However, the Great Plains and Gulf Coast States experience the largest number of Tornadoes. The greatest frequency of Tornadoes occur in April, May and June.

The destructive path of a tornado averages about 250 yards in width and 15 miles in length. In extreme conditions, a tornado may travel more than 300 miles and leave a path of total destruction more than a mile wide. Tornadoes will travel up to 70 mph, with wind speeds approaching 400 mph within the tornado's center. Tornadoes usually travel from a westerly direction to an easterly direction.

Signs and Warnings

Tornadoes develop during severe thunderstorms. While not all thunderstorms create Tornadoes, the potential is there. During violent weather, keep tuned to a local television or radio station for tornado reports.

If you are outside and see a funnel-shaped cloud with obvious rotating motion, it may be a tornado. As a tornado develops, it will produce a loud roar that grows louder as the funnel cloud touches the ground. When nearby, a tornado has a loud sound comparable to the combined roars of several jet engines.

The National Severe Storms Forecast Center in Kansas City issues tornado watches. Local National Weather Service offices issue tornado warnings. Garden City has an excellent system of public warning sirens which can be activated by our Police/Fire Dispatch Center.

A **tornado watch** indicates that conditions are right for a tornado to develop and the sky should be watched.

A **tornado warning** indicates a tornado has been sighted or is spotted on radar. Warnings will give the location of the tornado and the area immediately affected by the warning.

Immediate Dangers

The immediate threat from Tornadoes is danger to life and damage to property from violently whirling winds and debris hurled through the air by winds.

Long-Term Dangers

Long-term risks include the possibility of building collapse, fallen trees and power lines, broken gas lines, broken sewer and water mains, and the outbreak of fires. Agricultural crops and industries may be damaged or destroyed.

Preparedness

The best preparation for a tornado is to designate a safe place in or around your home as a tornado shelter. Tornado shelters are safest if they are underground. A storm cellar or basement away from windows offers the best protection.

If neither of these is available, plan to find shelter under heavy furniture or mattresses near an inside wall of your house on the ground floor. Get under solid furniture or cover yourselves with mattresses pulled off the bed.

Plan tornado drills with your family so everyone knows what to do.

Know the location of the designated shelter where you work or go to school.

Plan to evacuate your manufactured (mobile) home.

Make an inventory of your household furnishing and other possessions.

Supplement the written inventory with photographs or video. Keep inventories and pictures in a safe deposit box or some other safe place away from the premises.

The Fire Department recommends that residents and businesspeople equip themselves with special radio receivers which are available through local retailers. These "NOAA Weather Radios" transmit an alert tone for watches and warnings and carry 24-hour weather and emergency information from the National Weather Service Detroit/Pontiac Forecast Office. This is one of the fastest methods of receiving such information, direct from its source. The NOAA Weather Radio station serving Garden City operates on 162.55 MHz.

Response

If you have a storm cellar or shelter, go to it immediately with your family. If no shelter is available, go to your basement and get under a heavy work bench or stairs. Do not position yourself directly underneath heavy appliances on the floor above you.

If your home has no basement, stay in the center of the house away from the windows or in a small room on the ground floor that is away from outside walls. Take cover under solid furniture or mattresses. Protect your head.

In mobile homes or vehicles, leave and take shelter in a substantial structure. If there is no nearby shelter, lie flat in the nearest ditch or ravine with your hands shielding your head.

In any large building, such as an office or department store, avoid all large, poorly supported roofs. Go to the basement or to an inner hallway on a lower floor.

Do not drive. You are safer in a home or basement shelter than in a car.

If you are driving in a city and spot a tornado, get out of your car and go to a nearby building.

If you are driving in open country, drive at a right angle away from the tornado's path if you can safely do so. Do not try to outrun the storm. If you cannot avoid the tornado, get out of your car. Lie flat in the nearest depression, such as a ditch, culvert or ravine. protect your head and stay low to the ground.

Recovery

After a tornado passes, keep tuned to the local radio or TV station to get an all-clear signal before leaving your shelter. Sometimes more than one tornado will develop during a violent storm.

Be alert to fire hazards such as broken electric wires or damaged electrical equipment, gas or oil leaks, or smoldering piles of wet hay or feed. Garden City firefighters can assess and stabilize many such hazards. Contact the department by calling 9-1-1.

It should also be noted that firefighters secure hazardous areas with yellow "Fire Line" tape. For your safety, NEVER move or cross such tape.