

## **Severe Weather Precautions**

### Thunderstorm or Tornado Warning

1. You will be notified of a **Warning** through commercial radio, weather radio, TV or the Civil Defense siren.
2. If outside, move indoors as soon as possible.
3. Move to an interior hallway or basement.
4. In buildings with exposed, exterior walkways, remain in classrooms until immediate danger has passed.
5. Avoid upper floors, large glassed areas and windows.
6. Stay out of parking decks, gymnasiums and auditoriums.
7. Stay away from electrical appliances.
8. Only use the telephone for emergency calls.

### **Thunderstorms**

Each year, Alabama experiences a wide variety of hazardous weather - from severe spring storms to the crippling effects of a blanket of snow. In each case, the impact of weather can be serious. In the Birmingham area, thunderstorms occur on the average of 75 days of the year. While most of the more violent storms occur in the spring and summer months, thunderstorms may develop at any time of the year. Typically, thunderstorms may include very high winds, rain, hail and lightning. The most dangerous aspect of a thunderstorm is lightning.

### **Lightning**

Lightning kills two or three Alabamians each year and several others are injured by lightning strikes. From 1990 to 1992, lightning killed four people and injured 127 in the state. Lightning has been appropriately called "the underrated killer." Every thunderstorm contains this potential killer. Whether it is the large, springtime severe thunderstorm or the more common afternoon summer variety, that electrical charge (which may reach 100 million volts) is always present and searching for the path of the least resistance to complete the circuit. It might strike you, an isolated tree or an object in the open. Keep in mind that you do not have to be standing directly beneath a cloud to be zapped.

If you are outdoors and cannot seek shelter in a large building or house:

1. Stay away from open water, tractors, farm or lawn equipment or small metal vehicles such as motorcycles, bicycles or golf carts.
2. Do not stand underneath tall isolated trees or telephone poles.
3. Avoid hilltops or open areas.
4. Stay away from wire fences, clotheslines, metal pipes and railings.

### **Tornadoes**

Alabama ranks fourth in the nation for the number of killer tornadoes and fifth in the number of fatalities. In an average year, National Weather Service records indicate that Alabama will experience 21 tornadoes that will be responsible for killing eight people.

The peak season for tornadoes in Alabama occurs during March, April and May. Tornadoes sometimes occur in November. While tornadoes can occur at any time, the most common is late afternoon and early evening between 2 and 10 p.m.

## **Watches**

A Tornado Watch is announced when the National Weather Service has determined that conditions are favorable for the formation of a tornado. You should be aware of the current weather conditions in your area by staying tuned to the radio or television. A battery operated weather radio is recommended. Be prepared to move to a safe location immediately.

Tornadoes can come from any direction, but generally approach the Birmingham area from the south or southwest. Report funnel-shaped, rotating clouds immediately to the UAB Police Department. If you suspect, but cannot confirm a sighting, report your suspicions.

## **Warnings**

A Tornado Warning means that at least one tornado has been sighted. You should take shelter immediately to protect yourself from high winds, falling or flying objects and glass from breaking windows.

When a tornado threatens, the prime rule is to get as low as you can to put as many walls between yourself and the tornado as possible. The following are a few other tips:

1. In any structure, go the lowest floor possible to an interior room, interior hall, or a small room such as a closet or bathroom. Most UAB buildings offer excellent protection; however, upper floors and areas with exterior windows should be avoided.
2. Don't try to watch the storm from a window, sudden high winds can blow the window out.
3. Avoid rooms with large, free-span roofs, such as auditoriums or gymnasiums.
4. In mobile homes or vehicles: if you don't have time to reach a shelter, take cover and lie flat in a ditch, culvert, excavation or ravine. Never attempt to outrun a tornado in a car. You could easily drive into the path of the tornado.

## **Planning**

Preparedness planning is an individual's responsibility. Betting that the storm will not strike you may be the most costly mistake you ever make. To protect yourself and your family, you should have a safety plan in action now, before danger hits. The National Weather Service advises that a severe preparedness plan should include:

- A thorough knowledge of the hazard and the proper safety rules to be followed.
- Selection and designation of the best shelter you have.
- A reliable method of receiving warning information.
- Instructions in the proper procedures to follow when a watch or warning is issued - or if threatening weather should develop with no advance warning - for each person in the household, factory or business. Drill to test and practice the plan.

For families, everyone should be involved in developing the weather plans. Also, a safety plan should be developed for each type of bad weather that affects your area.

Simply discussing what to do is not enough. To be fully prepared and ready to act, the plan you develop at home or at work should be rehearsed. Don't make a plan and then lock it away for safekeeping. Practice it - often.