



Licking County Planning Department
And Offices of Community & Economic Development
20 South Second Street, Newark, Ohio 43055

2009 Severe Weather Calendar of Events

National Flood Safety Awareness Week - March 16-20, 2009
Ohio's Spring Severe Weather Awareness Week - March 22-28, 2009
Statewide Tornado Drill - March 25, 2009 9:50 a.m.
National Lightning Safety Awareness Week - June 21-27, 2009
Ohio's Winter Safety Awareness Week - November 15-21, 2009

National Lightning Safety Awareness Week, June 21-27, 2009

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and the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness

Seasons come and seasons go, but the need for safety in dealing with severe weather events knows no season. In fact, the more information we have regarding extremes of nature, the better that we can protect our family, our property, and our community.

Licking County officials have partnered with various other agencies and entities to present the following information to help increase the safety of our citizens as we leave winter weather behind us and head into the spring and summer seasons.

Thunderstorm/Lightning Facts & Safety Tips
Lightning Safety Awareness Week: June 21-27, 2009



REMEMBER: When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!

Thunderstorm/Lightning Facts

Summertime is the peak season for one of the nation's deadliest weather phenomena - lightning. According to the National Weather Service, 24 people in the United States were killed by lightning strikes in 2008. Forty-five people were struck and killed by lightning in 2007.

Of those who were killed by lightning in 2007,

- 98% were outside
- 89% were male
- 30% were males between the ages of 20 and 25 years
- 25% were standing under a tree
- 25% of the deaths occurred on or near water

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

Lightning Safety Awareness: Education is Key. Few people really understand the dangers of lightning. Many do not act promptly to protect themselves because they don't understand all of the dangers associated with thunderstorms and lightning. People need to become aware of the behavior that can put them at risk of being struck and know what they can do to reduce that risk.

Lightning Discharge: Stay Out of Its Path - During a thunderstorm, each flash of cloud-to-ground lightning is a potential killer. The determining factor on whether a particular flash could be deadly depends on whether a person is in the path of the lightning discharge. In addition to the visible flash that travels through the air, the current associated with the lightning discharge travels along the ground.

An Approaching Thunderstorm: When to Seek Shelter - Lightning can strike as far as 10 miles away from the rain area in a thunderstorm, which is about the distance one can hear thunder. To be safe, remember: *If you can hear thunder, you are within striking distance. Seek shelter immediately!* If the sky looks threatening, take shelter before hearing thunder.

The 30-30 Rule - Use the 30-30 rule where there is good visibility and nothing is obstructing your view of the thunderstorm. When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If that time is 30 seconds or less, the thunderstorm is within six miles and is dangerous. Seek shelter immediately. Wait at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder before leaving shelter.

Things to Avoid While Sheltering Indoors - People should stay away from windows and doors and avoid contact with anything that conducts electricity, which include using telephones (corded and cordless) during storms. Cellular telephones are the safest to use during thunderstorms.

Do not shower, bathe or wash dishes during thunderstorms. Water is an electrical conductor; you should avoid contact with plumbing.

Helping a Lightning Strike Victim - If a person is struck by lightning, medical care is usually needed immediately to save the person's life. Cardiac arrest and irregularities, burns and nerve damage are typical life-threatening injuries when a person is struck. Knowing first aid measures, which include cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), can help lightning-strike victims survive. American Red Cross chapters and local fire departments often offer first aid and CPR classes.

Shelter from Thunder and Lightning Storms

Safe Shelter from 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.

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.

Stay Safe While Inside - Corded telephone use is the leading cause of indoor lightning injuries in the United States. Lightning can travel long distances on phone and electrical wires, particularly in rural areas. If you must use a phone during a storm, a cellular phone is safest. Stay away from windows and doors, as these can provide the path for a direct strike. Basements are generally safe places to go during thunderstorms, but avoid contact with concrete walls that may contain metal reinforcing bars. Also, avoid washers and dryers because they have contacts with plumbing and electrical systems and contain an electrical path to the outside through the dryer vent.

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. You may want to consider bringing your pets inside the home or garage during thunderstorms.

Protect Personal Property - Lightning generates electrical surges that can damage electronic equipment some distance from the actual strike. Typical surge protectors WILL NOT protect equipment from a lightning strike. Before a thunderstorm threatens, unplug any unnecessary appliances and electronic equipment from conductors.

Homeowners insurance claims and lightning payout losses

According to the Insurance Information Institute (III), in 2007 the insurance industry paid over \$942 million for damages caused by lightning. The average cost of a lightning-related claim was \$5,321. Even though the number of lightning claims decreased, the average cost per claim continues to rise as more homeowners purchase wide-screen TVs, computers and other expensive electronic devices.

For more information on lightning safety and education, visit the National Weather Service Web site at <http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov>, and the Lightning Protection Institute Web site at <http://www.lightning.org>.

Also, visit the Ohio Severe Weather Awareness web site at <http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov/> for additional details.