

101 CRITICAL DAYS OF SUMMER 2014

Risk management has a role in everything we do, both on and off duty. It continues to be the job of the safety professionals to provide guidance to all Airmen about the dangers of the season. Airmen use sound risk management every day on duty and, while the main focus of the Critical Days of Summer campaign is off duty activities, Airmen must use the same risk management techniques in all circumstances.

Chapter 13
August 15, 2014



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Chapter 13: Singin' in the Rain

Topic: Weather Safety

As any outdoor lover knows, summer weather can be notoriously unpredictable. One minute you're sinking a line in the sun, the next your canoe is filling up with rainwater. Being trapped outdoors when storms strike—whether camping, beach going or just traversing a trail far from shelter—can turn a standard summer thunderstorm into a major threat to your safety. Knowing how to manage the risks in order to stay safe when the skies turn unfriendly can potentially prevent injury or save a life.

From heavy thunderstorms in the Southeast to tornadoes in the Midwest, preparing for summer storms is important for staying safe. Always have an emergency response plan in place to respond to a severe storm. These plans can apply to flooding, tornadoes, and electrical storms. Keeping a disaster preparedness kit in your home and vehicle will ensure that you are always prepared in the event of disaster conditions.

Listed below are tips from AAA on storm preparation:

Prep your house prior to the storm:

- Inspect siding for any loose pieces that could blow off during the storm.
- Check roof for any loose shingles.
- Ensure all gutters and window shutters are tight and secure.
- Cut dead tree limbs.
- Trim branches and limbs that could shatter windows or enter your home.

As the storm approaches:

- Bring patio furniture, toys, bikes, etc. inside the house or store in a secure garage.
- Anchor large items such as sheds, boats, swing sets, etc. to the ground.
- Close all doors and windows.
- Provide shelter to animals, especially if hail is predicted. Know your pets' hiding spots as they are sensitive and react much earlier to the storm's arrival than a human being.

Lightning and home electronics

- With expensive home electronics such as plasma televisions, computers, and high-end gaming devices becoming commonplace in the average household, homeowners are encouraged to safeguard these devices from lightning with a surge protector.
- The Insurance Information Institute (www.iii.org) recommends a whole-house surge protector that covers electrical, telephone, and cable/satellite TV lines entering your home.

Fire-related hazards during and after a summer storm

- The power of lightning's electrical charge and intense heat can electrocute on contact. Beware of areas that can be electrically charged during and after a storm (e.g., pools, puddles of water).
- Appliances, telephones, etc. that have been exposed to water can short out and become a fire hazard.
- Downed power and cable lines. Never go near any wire on the ground; report these immediately to the power and or cable company.



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Summer storms & your vehicle

- Severe thunderstorms and tropical weather systems can dump heavy rainfall over a short period of time making it extremely dangerous to navigate an automobile. Rivers, lakes, and ditches fill with water and overflow into low-lying or poorly drained areas. Urban and small stream flooding can occur in less than one hour.

Driving during a summer storm:

- Don't attempt to drive through the water if you cannot see the road or its line markings. It's not very likely that you will be able to judge the exact depth of the water or be certain that the road is intact underneath it.
- Moving water exerts pressure on a car. As water depth increases or a greater area is exposed to moving water, the pressure exerted increases and can wash the car away.
- The surface of the road is affected as it becomes slippery. Water, sand and mud are now what the vehicle is resting on and can cause it to be swept away.
- As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your car and potentially stall your engine.
- One foot of water can move most cars off the road.
- SUVs are even more prone to be swept away due to their size and larger tires making them more buoyant.
- If your vehicle stalls or is suddenly caught in rising water, leave it immediately and seek higher ground.

Water damage to your vehicle:

- If your car has been exposed to or driven through standing or moving water, follow these guidelines to spot potential problems and hidden damage:
 - Check the air filter, if wet, it will not perform.
 - Inspect and test headlights, taillights, and turn signals.
 - Check suspension joints, oil and transmission dip sticks, radiator and undercarriage of your car. If there are any signs of water damage or something looks odd, contact your car care professional.
 - Check under carpets, upholstery and door trim areas for any water that may be trapped; do not let these areas "dry naturally" as mold, mildew and rust can form. Immediately take your vehicle to a professional to remove the water and moisture.
 - Listen for any odd sounds or abnormal noises.

And these are tips to follow if you're caught outdoors when a storm threatens:

- If you are in an open area, find a low place such as a ravine or valley. Be alert for flash floods.
- If you are in a forested area, find shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees, if possible.
- If you are on open water, get to land immediately and seek shelter.
- If you are in a car, keep the windows closed.
- If you are outdoors and feel your hair stand on end (an indication that lightning is about to strike), do not lie flat on the ground, as your fully-extended body will provide a larger surface to conduct electricity. Instead, squat low to the ground and place your hands over your ears and your head



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between your knees. The goal is to make you the smallest target possible and minimize contact with the ground.

- Stay away from anything made of metal: bicycles, golf clubs, golf carts, motorcycles, tractors, farm equipment, etc.
- Stay away from natural lightning rods, such as a tall tree in an open field, and avoid hilltops, the beach or boats on open water.

A brochure *Thunderstorms, Tornadoes, Lightning...Nature's Most Violent Storms* from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration can be found on the Ground Safety SharePoint site:

<https://cs3.eis.af.mil/sites/00-SE-AF-18/default.aspx>

Additional information can be found:

http://www.usfa.fema.gov/citizens/home_fire_prev/holiday-seasonal/summer_storms.shtm

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/severeweather/index.shtml>

<http://www.asecurelife.com/thunderstorm-safety/>

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/posters.htm>

http://www.weather.com/life/safety/thunderstorm/article/thunderstorms-during-the-storm_2011-10-05

