

Farm Resilience for Weather Emergencies

During and After a Severe Thunderstorm

Each year, about 100,000 thunderstorms happen in the United States, with 10 percent becoming severe (i.e., hail one inch diameter or larger, wind gusts of 58 mph or greater, and/or the presence of a tornado). Often, severe thunderstorms create additional hazards like flash flooding and lightning strikes that cause bodily injuries, fatalities, and extensive damage to property and infrastructure. Prompt action before and after a storm may help minimize the impacts.

During a Severe Storm

Stay informed.

- Listen to the radio, television, or a NOAA weather radio for situation developments.

If there is time, turn off electrical power to machines, barns, and other structures that may become damaged.

If a WARNING is issued – Seek shelter immediately!

- **Avoid** natural lightning rods, tall, isolated trees in open areas, hilltops in open fields.
- In the woods, go to a low area (ravine or valley) under a thick growth of small trees; be alert for flash flooding.
- If you have no shelter, make yourself the smallest target by squatting low to the ground on the balls of your feet, minimizing contact with the ground, and placing your hands on your knees with your head between them.
- In a tractor or other vehicle, stay put. Vehicles often provide better protection than lying exposed in open fields, but avoid touching any metal.

After a Severe Storm

Assess the situation.

- Survey damage to your home, buildings, equipment, and crops.
- Examine your animals closely; contact your veterinarian if you observe injuries.
- Check the area for downed power lines; if found, notify your electric company immediately.

Account for your inventory.

- Account for all livestock, fuels, chemicals, machinery and equipment; use the inventory list previously prepared.
- Note any livestock losses.
- Check machinery and equipment for damage.
- Take photographs of all damage for insurance or emergency assistance purposes.
- Report any hazardous materials (e.g., fuels, agricultural chemicals) spills or leaks to emergency response personnel.



Cleanup safely

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves to protect your body from injury.
- Be aware of hazards that may cause injury to you or others cleaning up (e.g., chain saws, electrical or chemical hazards).
- Use caution when clearing broken tree branches; downed or damaged power lines can send electrical current through them.
- Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated; use in well ventilated areas.

If someone has been injured by lightning,

- Call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services.
- Check the person for burns or other injuries; being struck by lightning can also cause nervous system damage, broken bones, loss of hearing or eyesight.
- If breathing has stopped, begin rescue breathing.
- If the heart has stopped beating, a trained person should give CPR.

