



Severe Weather Facts & Myths

<http://www.weather.gov/om/severeweather>



Myth: Highway and interstate overpasses are safe shelters against a tornado.

Fact: Overpasses can concentrate the tornado winds, causing them to be significantly stronger. This places the people under them in an even more dangerous situation. In recent years, several people seeking shelter beneath overpasses have been killed or severely injured. Being above ground level during a tornado is dangerous.

Myth: The low pressure with a tornado causes buildings to explode. Opening the windows will equalize the pressure, saving the building.

Fact: Opening the windows in an attempt to equalize pressure will have no effect. It is the violent winds and debris that cause most structural damage. It is more important for you to move to a safe area away from windows and exterior walls. With a tornado, every second counts, so use your time wisely and take cover.

Myth: Thunderstorms and tornadoes always move from west to east.

Fact: More often than not, thunderstorms move from west to east. Conditions in the atmosphere dictate how and where storms will move, and it can be in any direction. Tornadoes have been known to act erratic, and can change directions and speed very quickly. Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle.

Myth: It's not raining here, and skies above me are clear, therefore I am safe from lightning.

Fact: Lightning can strike many miles away from the thunderstorm. If storms are in your area, but skies happen to be clear above you, that certainly does not imply you are safe from lightning. Though these "Bolts from the Blue" are infrequent, lightning strikes 10 to 15 miles away from the storm are not out of the question.

Myth: Since I am inside my house and out of the storm, I am completely safe from lightning.

Fact: Just because you have taken shelter inside, you are not automatically safe. While inside waiting out a storm, avoid using the telephone or electrical appliances and do not take showers or baths. Also stay away from doors and windows. Telephone lines, cords, plumbing, even metal window and door frames are all lightning conductors and pose a threat

Myth: Large and heavy vehicles, such as SUVs and pickups, are safe to drive through flood waters.

Fact: It is a common belief that the larger the vehicle, the deeper the water it can drive through. Many people do not realize that two feet of water can float most vehicles, including SUVs and pickups. If the water is moving rapidly, vehicles can be swept away.

Myth: Flash floods only occur along flowing streams.

Fact: Flash floods can and do occur in dry creek or river beds as well as urban areas where no streams are present.