

Addressing Storm Anxiety

Rebekka Copple, Meteorologist @ NWS Central IL
CDR Kami Cooper, NWS Behavior Health & Wellness Officer
& friends!





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01

Who We Are

The National Weather Service
and your local office

What is the NWS?



Do You Know What County You Live In?

Knowing where you live in relation to other locations on a map is an important aspect of being prepared for severe weather!

Know which NWS Office is responsible for your county too!



The National Weather Service is an agency embedded within NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)



There are over 122 Weather Forecast Offices in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Guam

- Additional regional and national centers are located over the U.S.



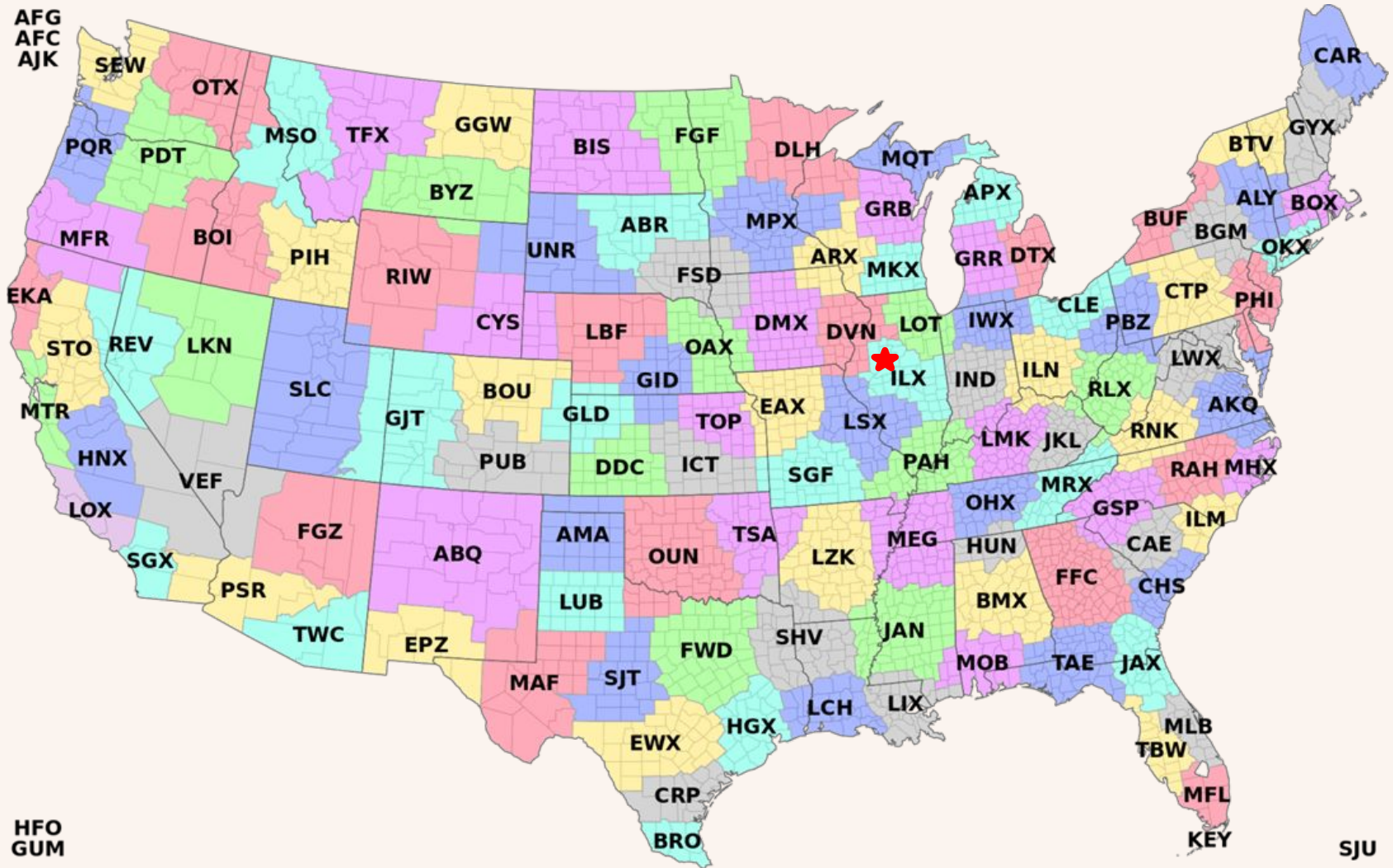
NWS has meteorologists, computer & communications specialists, hydrologists, IT & electronics experts, and physicists



92 NWS offices across the country that release a weather balloon twice daily at both 00Z & 12Z

"Provide weather, water and climate data, forecasts, warnings, and impact-based decision support services for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy"

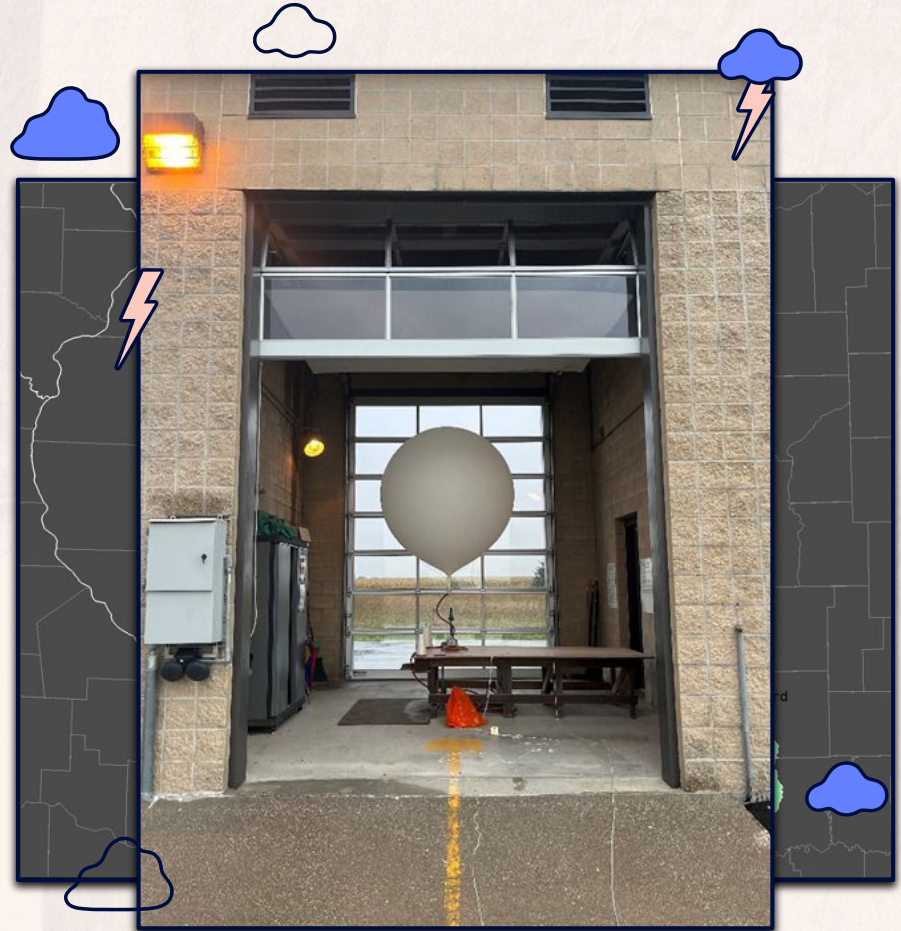




Central IL

Weather Forecast Office

- ☀️ We are located in Lincoln, IL
- ☀️ Our County Warning Area (CWA) consists of 35 counties in central & southeast IL
- ☀️ Open 365x24x7
- ☀️ 22 employees - 16 meteorologists, 3 electronic technicians, 1 Information Technology Officer, 1 Hydrologist, & 1 Admin Assistant
- ☀️ We are 1 of 92 NWS offices across the country that release a weather balloon twice daily at both 00Z & 12Z



Rebekka and why it's important to her



- Born and raised in Southern Illinois
- Went to college in South Carolina and in Illinois
- Experienced a wide variety of weather from hurricanes to winter storms
- From a really young age, I was terrified of rain, storms, wind...
- How I coped:
 - Learned more about what I was scared of by watching shows and reading books on weather
 - There is more that I will cover during the coping section
- My little secret...



*****DISCLOSURE: I am not a medical professional. For help for your specific fear, please reach out to your doctor or therapist/counselor. There is no shame in asking for help when you need it.***

CDR Kami Cooper

DNP, PMHNP-BC, CCWS, CCTP



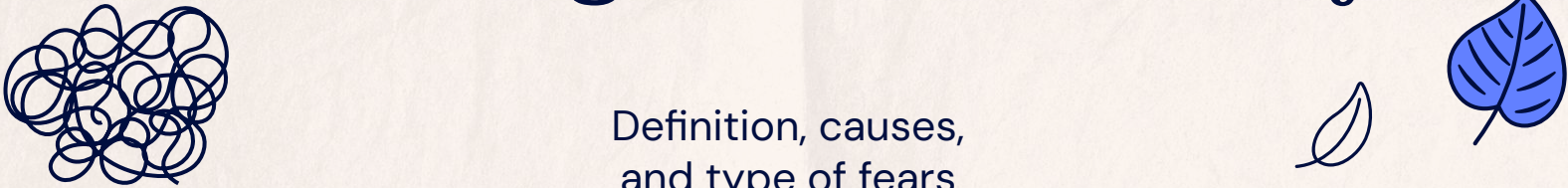
- Nurse Officer in US Public Health Service
- Born, raised, and bound to the East
- Over 15 deployment for crisis response
- Lifetime Girl Scout





02

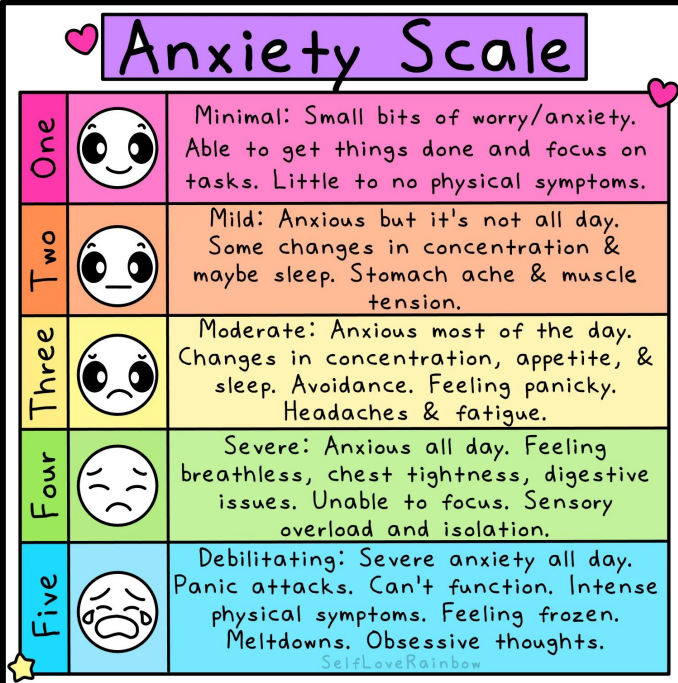
Defining Storm Anxiety








Definition, causes,
and type of fears

Defining Storm Anxiety

- Signs of weather-related anxiety include:
 - Obsessive thoughts about the potential for storms
 - Distress when you know a thunderstorm is forecasted
 - Extreme fear or dread during weather events.
- Clinical symptoms may include:
 - Chest pain
 - Dizziness or fainting (syncope)
 - Diarrhea
 - Heart racing or heart palpitations
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Shortness of breath (dyspnea)
 - Sweating
 - Tremors (uncontrollable shaking)
- This is common, especially in children and those who have experienced a traumatic or major weather event.



Anxiety Scale

One		Minimal: Small bits of worry/anxiety. Able to get things done and focus on tasks. Little to no physical symptoms.
Two		Mild: Anxious but it's not all day. Some changes in concentration & maybe sleep. Stomach ache & muscle tension.
Three		Moderate: Anxious most of the day. Changes in concentration, appetite, & sleep. Avoidance. Feeling panicky. Headaches & fatigue.
Four		Severe: Anxious all day. Feeling breathless, chest tightness, digestive issues. Unable to focus. Sensory overload and isolation.
Five		Debilitating: Severe anxiety all day. Panic attacks. Can't function. Intense physical symptoms. Feeling frozen. Meltdowns. Obsessive thoughts.

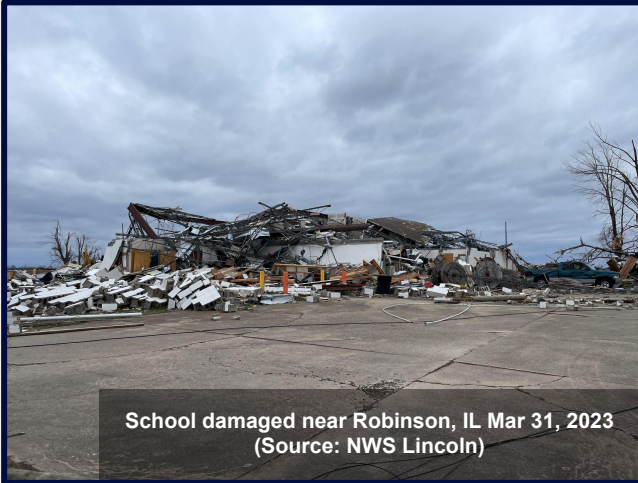
SelfLoveRainbow



Defining Storm Anxiety



- Experts aren't sure what causes this fear to develop. Potential causes suggested:
 - Traumatic event when young
 - More likely to develop this fear if a parent and/or sibling also have it (genetics or learned behavior)
- Sometimes even develops for no apparent reason



Types of Weather Phobias (fears)



Astraphobia

(aka brontophobia) the fear of thunder & lightning



Ancraophobia*

The fear of wind



Chionophobia

The fear of snow



Lilapsophobia

The fear of tornadoes or hurricanes



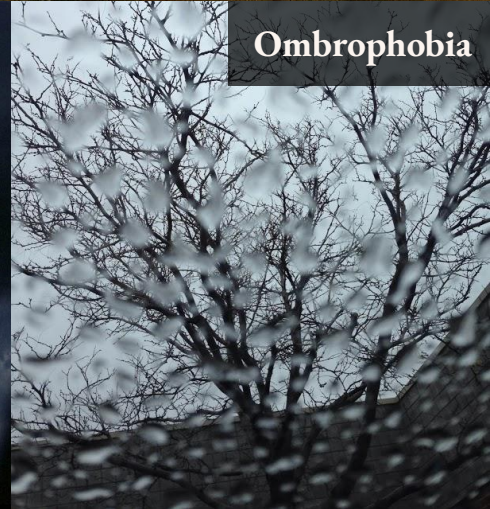
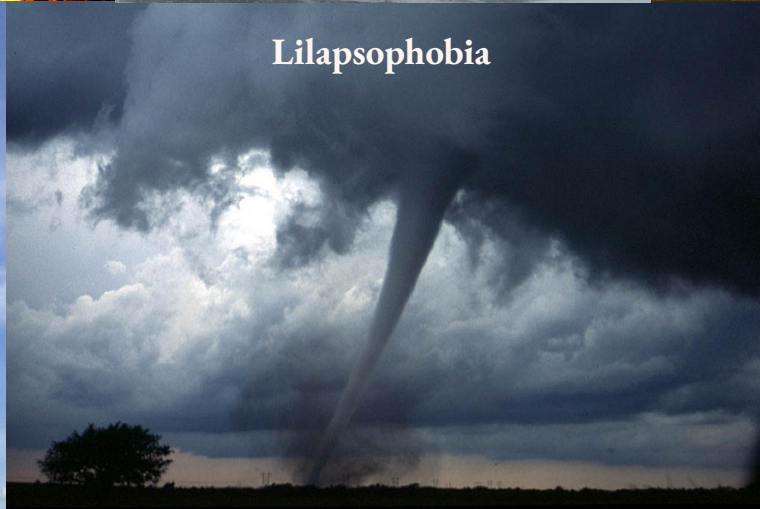
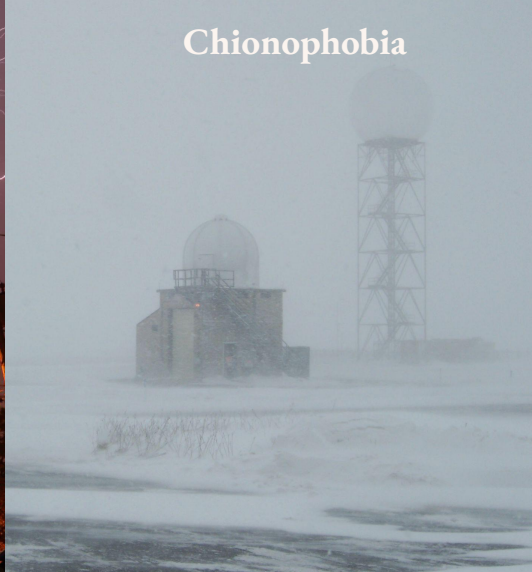
Nephophobia*

The fear of clouds



Ombrophobia

The fear of rain





03

Coping Mechanisms & Treatments

Advice on how to cope and
what treatments are available

Coping Mechanisms - Take Power Over Fear!



- Have a plan: Know where your safe space is, get a weather radio, pack an emergency kit
 - Have 3 ways to receive warnings
 - Emergency kit supplies/lists: <https://www.ready.gov/kit>
 - PRACTICE your plan
- Learn about your local warning systems: outdoor sirens, mass notification systems, etc
- Learn about weather and its terms. (i.e. watch vs warning vs advisory)
 - This can be done by attending our spotter classes and free online courses... more info at the end
- Visit your local NWS office



Coping Mechanisms - Take Power Over Fear!



When bad weather threatens you or your location, here are a few tips and tricks from us here at NWS Central Illinois

1. Put on durable shoes (boots/tennis shoes) in case you need to take shelter
2. Have your devices charged in case the power goes out, so you can still communicate and have weather awareness
3. Hang out in your safe spot, even if a warning hasn't been issued for your location.
4. Turn on your local news channel
5. If affordable, invest in a generator for when the power goes out.
6. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!



Coping Mechanisms - Take Power Over Fear!



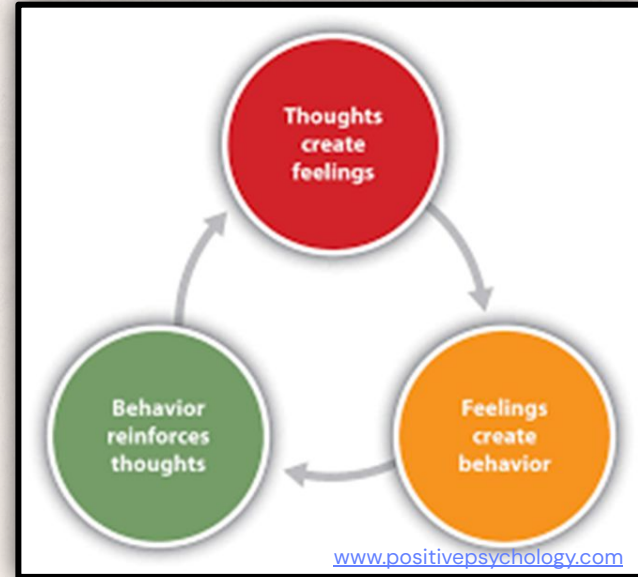
Sometimes, it takes more than knowing how to cope...

Don't be afraid to reach out for help from friends, family, or a professional. It takes time to overcome your fears, just remember that the little steps add up to big changes.



When to Seek Help

- Storm anxiety significantly impacts daily functioning, quality of life, or relationships
- Symptoms persist or worsen over time despite self-help efforts
- Recognize anxiety-provoking thought patterns:
 - All or nothing thinking (using words like "never," "always," "totally," "horrible," or "ruined")
 - Catastrophizing (assuming the worst possible outcome)
- Why consult a mental health professional?
 - assessment and diagnosis
 - treatment plan
 - support throughout



Self-Led Therapies



- Mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and meditation promote relaxation and reduce physiological arousal.
- Only when you feel empowered to manage anxiety independently.
- Regular practice builds resilience against anxiety triggers.
- Integrate these techniques into daily routines for ongoing benefits.



Clinician-Led Therapies

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - identify and challenge negative thought patterns
- Exposure Therapy - gradually exposes you to anxiety triggers to reduce fear responses
- Tailored therapies develop adaptive coping strategies
- Professionals will tailor and adjust treatments based on individual progress



Medication Therapies



- Medications may be prescribed to manage severe anxiety symptoms
 - *SSRIs* (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors) help regulate serotonin levels in the brain, which can improve mood and reduce anxiety over time.
 - *Benzodiazepines* provide rapid relief from acute anxiety but typically for short-term use due to dependency risk
- Medication should be prescribed and monitored by a healthcare professional experienced in treating anxiety disorders.



Positive Motivation and Self-Talk

- Motivation fosters resilience and determination
- Positive self-talk replaces negative thoughts
- Setting achievable goals, both short-term and long-term, provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment
- Practice self-compassion by being kind to yourself and acknowledging progress



Seasonal Affective Disorder & Storm Anxiety

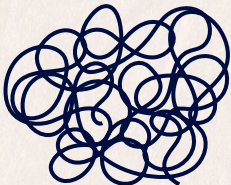
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – a type of depression that occurs at specific times of the year, usually in the winter months
 - low energy, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and changes in sleep and appetite patterns
- Storm anxiety and SAD can intersect during seasons with heightened storm activity or darker, gloomier weather
- Managing SAD
 - light therapy, counseling, medication, and lifestyle changes to improve mood and reduce anxiety






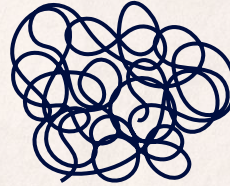
04

NWS Resources



How to prepare for scary weather and
resources available from the NWS





NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

HOME FORECAST PAST WEATHER SAFETY INFORMATION EDUCATION NEWS SEARCH ABOUT

Local forecast by "City, ST or ZIP code"
Enter location Go
Location Help

News Headlines
• [Changes to Cold Weather Related Headlines](#)

Storm Anxiety and Stress Central Illinois
Weather Forecast Office

[Weather.gov](#) > [Central Illinois](#) > [Storm Anxiety and Stress](#)

Current Hazards Current Conditions Radar Forecasts Rivers and Lakes Climate and Past Weather Local Programs

Advice from Meteorologists on Dealing with Storm Anxiety

Para la traducción al español: https://www.weather.gov/ilx/storm_anxiety_spanish

In our area, we will see storms every year, and unfortunately, there's nothing we can do to stop them. This can make you feel powerless. But there is a way to empower yourself and that's through knowledge and preparation. It can be helpful to think about what exactly it is about severe weather or storms that makes you afraid, stressed or nervous. Knowing what it is that makes you stressed or anxious can help you find ways to deal with that stress and anxiety.

To view the [Addressing Storm Anxiety](#) presentation slides, please click [here](#). The recorded version of the webinar can be found on our [YouTube](#) Channel.

Introduction Sheltering from Storms Getting/Using Weather Info Getting Storm Warnings Family Communication

Here are some things you can do to empower yourself and take more control over your weather fears:

**Also available in Spanish*

Visit our website

- This can answer any questions or concerns you may have after the webinar is over.
- The recorded webinar and slides can be found on this website

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on Facebook

Follow us on YouTube

ILX RSS Feed

HAZARDOUS WEATHER

Decision Support
Spotter Briefing Page
Submit Storm Report
Outlooks
Winter Weather Monitor
Probabilistic Snow/Ice
Forecasts

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Latest Observations
Daily Climate Maps
Local Text Products
CoCoRaHS
Drought Info

PAST WEATHER

Peoria Climate
Springfield Climate
Lincoln Climate
Tornado Climatology
Severe Weather Data

OBSERVER INFO

SWOP Network
COOP Program
Skywarn Network

WEATHER SAFETY

Preparedness
Weather Radio
Storm Anxiety and Stress
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

ABOUT US

What We Do
Office History
Tours and Job Shadows

Winter Storm Planning Timeline

A few days out

If the forecast calls for winter weather, start preparing now.



Have emergency supplies for your home & car



Check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors



Replenish fuel for your car and heating sources

The day before

Forecast accuracy continues to improve, so keep checking the latest.



Adjust plans



Have multiple ways to receive Warnings



Bring pets indoors and ensure they have water

During & After

Remain vigilant and stay informed. Drive only if necessary.



Check on neighbors and family



Properly ventilate emergency heat sources



Keep generators at least 20 feet from your home



Take it easy when shoveling

It's important to have MULTIPLE ways to receive severe weather warnings!



NOAA
Weather
Radio

Commercial
radio and TV
stations



Cellphones

Internet and
social media



Outdoor
warning
sirens

Make sure you have a way to receive warnings while you are asleep!



Weather.gov/Lincoln



NWSLincoln

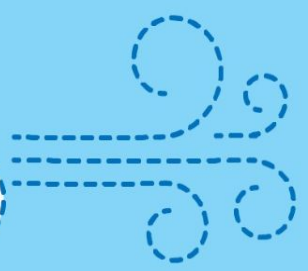


@NWSLincolnIL



National Weather Service – Lincoln, IL

When the Wind Blows



Identify an interior room in your house or at work that you can take shelter in during high wind warnings.



Head Inside Immediately

If you are driving and aren't near a sturdy building, hold the steering wheel with both hands and slow down.



Be Careful on the Road

High winds can create dangerous fallen or blowing objects.



Stay Clear of Hazards From Above



Stay Clear of Trees



Beware of Loose Outdoor Items



Spending Time Outdoors?



Be Aware of the Forecast Before You Head Out



Know How You Will Receive A Warning If One Is Issued



Know Where The Nearest Shelter Is Located



When Action Needs to be Taken, **DON'T WAIT!**

Did you know....



Tornadoes

Chance of one home being struck by a tornado: 1 in 12,000

80% are considered weak EFO/EF1
18% fall in the EF2 to EF3 range
2% are EF4 or EF5



Snow Storms

A large majority of snowstorms in the Midwest produce between 2-12 inches

Many are in the lower to middle part of this range



Lightning

Chance of being struck by lightning: 1 in 15,300

Of those struck: 70-90% survive
Large majority did not take proper precautions (recreational activities)



Flooding

Rivers typically have a longer response time, allowing for preparation

Smaller streams react quicker, but still provide some time to evacuate

With proper precautions, most severe weather is survivable.

Want to learn more?



Attend one of our [Spotter Talks](#) near you this spring!

- Find your local talk on our website
- Learn about all types of severe weather
- Learn some weather basics
- Help us by reporting what you see
- The classes are **FREE**

To watch a recording of the Central IL spotter talk, visit the link to the right under the "[Spotter Resources](#)" tab on our website



Find your local spotter talks by visiting your forecast offices website! (see to the right➡)



Various links to local spotter training calendars:

www.weather.gov/ilx/spotter

<https://www.weather.gov/pah/spottertraining>

NWS St Louis Spotter Training

https://www.weather.gov/lot/spotter_talk

<https://www.weather.gov/dvn/spotters#schedule>



Want to learn more?



[COMET MetEd](#) online courses

- Wide-variety of weather courses
- All **FREE** for you to take!
- All you need is a login account & password on the MetEd web page.
 - "Role of the SKYWARN Spotter" and "SKYWARN Spotter Convective Basics"



For materials in a more accessible format, you can visit our specialized websites:

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing: <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/dhh-safety>
- Ansiedad por tormenta en español (translated storm anxiety page): https://www.weather.gov/ilx/storm_anxiety_spanish
- Seguridad Meteorológica (Weather Safety): <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/spanish>
- Weather Safety Materials for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities: <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/intellectualdisabilities>



Want to learn more?



Weather Safety

[Weather.gov](#) > [NWS Education](#) > Weather Safety

www.weather.gov/education/weather

NWS Education

National Program

[JetStream](#) [Students](#) [Citizen Science](#) [Educator Resources](#) [Data Resources](#) [Safety](#) [Outreach](#) [Videos](#) [Connect with Us](#)



NWS National Seasonal Safety Campaigns:

NWS Seasonal Safety Campaigns



WRN infographics



Watch Out...
STORMS AHEAD!

NWS and Partners Publication Brochures




Weather Safety Materials for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities



NWS Weather Radio (WR1206Z) 09

Weather Safety for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



EPA: Sun Safety



Welcome future Weather Wizard!
Are you ready to start your weather safety training?

Weather Bug Safety Training



NWS Safety Tips



SPC Tornado Preparedness Tips For School Administrators



Weather Ready Nation: Prepare and Be Safe!



Are you part of an organization that represents an underserved community?



This part of an effort to reach our more underserved communities and bring further awareness to the public.

We would love to communicate with you about becoming one of our Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors and have a discussion about how we can better serve your community. Reach out for more information!

Examples of Communities:

Non-english speaking communities, unhoused, low income communities, rural communities, elderly or people with disabilities, etc



Thanks!

Does anyone have any questions?

nws.lincoln@noaa.gov

nws.paducah@noaa.gov

nws.stlouis@noaa.gov

www.weather.gov



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