Thunderstorms, Hail, Straight-Line Winds, Lightning

Thunderstorms affect relatively small areas when compared with most other storms. The typical thunderstorm is 15 miles in diameter and lasts for 30 minutes — but whatever their size, all thunderstorms are dangerous.

Severe thunderstorms produce large hail or winds of at least 58 mph. Some wind gusts can exceed 100 mph and produce tornado-like damage. That’s why many communities will sound their outdoor sirens for damaging straight-line winds. When a severe thunderstorm threatens, inside a strong structure. Mobile home occupants should go to a more permanent structure.

HAIL
Hail is product of thunderstorms that causes nearly one billion dollars in damage every year. Most hail is about pea-sized. Much of it is the size of baseballs, and it can reach grapefruit-size. Large hail stones fall faster than 100 mph and have been known to kill people.

THUNDERSTORM WINDS
Thunderstorms can produce straight-line winds that exceed 100 miles per hour. For this reason you should treat severe thunderstorms just as you would tornadoes. Move to an appropriate shelter if you are in the path of the storm. The strong rush of wind from a thunderstorm is called a downburst. One of the primary causes is rain-cooled air which accelerates downward, producing potentially damaging gusts of wind. Strong downbursts can be mistaken for tornadoes. They are often accompanied by a roaring sound similar to that of a tornado. Downbursts can easily overturn mobile homes, tear roofs off houses and topple trees. Campers are especially vulnerable because trees can fall into camp sites and onto tents. Minnesota's strongest thunderstorm gust in 2007 was 85 mph, near Goodridge on June 19.

LIGHTNING
Every thunderstorm produces lightning. Lightning kills about 100 Americans each year — more than tornadoes — and causes about 300 injuries.

Lightning Safety Tips:
1. All thunderstorms produce lightning.
2. Get inside a building or enclosed vehicle. Many fatalities occur when warning signs are ignored.
3. If you are caught in an open area with lightning around, crouch down immediately! Put your hands on your knees, but don't lie down on the ground.
4. Do not use a telephone or electrical appliance when lightning is taking place. A nearby lightning strike can travel through phone or power lines, right into the home.
5. Never seek shelter beneath one lone tree.