

CITY OF MUSCATINE



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STAYING SAFE WHEN SEVERE WEATHER IS NEAR

Understanding watches and warnings; Severe Weather Awareness Week March 24-28

MUSCATINE, Iowa – Severe thunderstorms can bring dangerous conditions, and it's essential to stay informed and prepared. According to the National Weather Service, a severe thunderstorm is defined as one capable of producing hail one inch or larger, which can damage plants, roofs, and vehicles, or wind gusts exceeding 58 mph, which can break branches, topple trees, and cause structural damage.

Some storms may produce extreme hazards such as softball-sized hail, winds over 100 mph, tornadoes, intense lightning, or heavy rain leading to flash flooding.

Understanding Watches and Warnings

- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch:** Issued when severe thunderstorms are possible in or near your area. Stay alert and be prepared to take action.
- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning:** Issued when severe weather is detected by radar or reported by trained spotters. Take immediate safety precautions.

Tips for Staying Safe

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Ready.gov and the National Weather Service recommend the following steps to stay safe before and during a storm:

- **Know Your Risk:** Severe storms can happen at any time of year, anywhere in the U.S.
- **Stay Informed:** Sign up for local alerts, including those from the Emergency Alert System (EAS) or NOAA Weather Radio. Learn your community's siren warning tones.
- **Monitor Weather Reports:** Pay attention to meteorologists' forecasts to understand when conditions may worsen.
- **Create a Communication Plan:** Establish a family emergency plan with designated meeting places and contact information. If your home lacks a basement, identify a nearby shelter such as a church or family member's house. Visit [Ready.Gov/MakeAPlan](https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan) for additional tips.
- **Include Pets in Plans:** Prepare for your pets' safety during emergencies. Resources for pet evacuation plans are available at [Plan for Your Pet](https://www.ready.gov/pets).
- **Identify Safe Shelters:** Choose a safe room within your home, preferably a basement, storm cellar, or an interior room on the lowest floor with no windows. Consider constructing a FEMA-compliant safe room or an ICC 500-standard storm shelter.
- **Stock Up on Supplies:** Gather essentials such as non-perishable food, water, medical supplies, medications, and cleaning supplies to sustain your household during extended sheltering.
- **Support Your Neighbors:** Encourage friends and neighbors to prepare for severe weather. Community preparedness enhances overall safety.

For more information, view the [Thunderstorm Information Sheet \(PDF\)](#).

Stay safe and stay prepared, Muscatine!

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