

## Week 1: Watch versus Warning

In Michigan, the tornado and thunderstorm season ranges from the end of April through August, with the peak being mid-June through July. The following terms are commonly used during this time, and it is important to understand the difference:

**Severe thunderstorm watch:** This means severe storms are likely to occur. Keep watch on the sky and stay tuned into your local media. Severe thunderstorms are those that are likely to have strong, damaging winds, hail, large amounts of lightning, and potentially tornadoes.

**Severe thunderstorm warning:** Indicates a severe thunderstorm has been spotted or indicated by radar in your area. This means there is danger to life and property and you should seek shelter in a secure, structurally sound location.

For more information: <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/thunderstorm/index.shtm>

**Tornado watch:** Tornadoes are possible given the current weather conditions. Stay tuned to local media and watch for approaching storms.

**Tornado warning:** This means a tornado has been spotted in your area and you should seek immediate cover. A basement is the best location to seek shelter, but if no basement is available, search for a sturdy room in the middle of your home with no doors or windows. Do not ever try to out run a tornado in your car. Look for cover immediately. If you cannot find shelter, get far away from trees and lie face down on the ground and cover the back of your head with your arms.

For more information: <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/tornado/index.shtm>



**What to add to your emergency kit:** Rescue whistle, a battery operated (or hand crank) radio with a weather band, list of local weather stations (TV and radio)

## Week 2: Tornadoes and Severe Thunderstorms

In the last 60 years, Michigan has seen anywhere from 2 up to 39 tornadoes in one season. The costs of these tornadoes can range from thousands to millions of dollars. What is the most unsettling about tornadoes is how hard they are to predict. It is important to always listen to weather reports thorough the spring and summer seasons and follow local health officials' advice. More information: <http://www.disastercenter.com/michigan/tornado.html>

To see where tornadoes are most likely: <http://www.tornadochaser.net/tornalley.html>

In Monroe County we are used to our share of severe thunderstorms (somehow always during the fair!). However, this does not mean they are any less serious. Severe thunderstorms are dangerous to life and property and it is important to take cover, close doors and windows, and listen for sirens that might indicate danger (such as a tornado).



**What to add to your emergency kit:** Flashlight, extra batteries, first aid kit, blankets and sleeping gear

### Week 3: Fires

Fires can happen anytime, anywhere, from a huge variety of causes. Lightning can cause a fire as can improper electrical wiring. It is important to remember that fires spread incredibly quickly. The most important thing to do when there is a fire is to evacuate! Smoke can be just as deadly as a fire, so make sure to crawl (if possible) beneath the thickest layers of smoke to avoid inhalation.

For more information: [http://www.fema.gov/hazard/fire/fire\\_during.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/hazard/fire/fire_during.shtm)



**What to add to your emergency kit:** NOTHING! You will not have time to find it and use it. You MUST evacuate. However, make sure your family has an escape plan and that you practice it at least once a year so everyone knows what to do if there is a fire.

### Week 4: Floods

Floods occur all over the United States, usually when there is excessive rainfall. Floods can vary from flash floods (occur rapidly and sometimes without warning) to slowly developing floods that develop over days or weeks. The severity of the flood depends on how dangerous it will be. Michigan usually only has mild flooding, but this can still pose a treat. High river and lake levels can make swimming, canoeing, and other water sports dangerous. Additionally, flood water can contain harmful bacteria from human and animal waste, so it is important to make sure you do not drink flood water or any water that has been contaminated by flood waters. It is also important to avoid standing in flood water for long periods of time since this can cause trench foot. See <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/trenchfoot.asp>

Lastly, winter flood waters can be extremely cold and exposure can cause hypothermia and/or frost bite. Make sure, no matter what the temperature, to stay on high ground and out of the water.



**What to add to your emergency kit:** Copy of your flood insurance papers (if you need flood insurance), extra pairs of socks and shoes, ponchos for each family member