



TDCJ Risk Management's
Training Circular

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TEXAS SEVERE WEATHER



TEXAS WEATHER, What can we say. As the old saying goes, if you don't like the weather, just wait around because it is going to change. We can have hot weather, cold weather, rain, spring weather, tornadoes and yes, even a hurricane all within a short time frame. But we love it here. Were else can you go and get this much excitement. Severe weather affects everyone in the Lone Star State, with tornadoes, thunderstorms, lightning, flooding, and even a hurricane. Especially in the spring, violent weather threatens countless adults, children, homes, schools, business, and your personal belongings. You would think by now living in Texas, we would be prepared for severe weather and not wait until the last minute. But the truth is, the majority of Texans are not prepared. Early preparation can save lives and property when disastrous weather occurs.

TORNADOES:

Texas is a prime spawning ground for tornadoes. In fact Texas has more tornadoes than any other state in the country.

If a Tornado is spotted in your area. Would you know what to do? Do you know what the right choices would be? Well, let the Risk Management Department give you a few good choices.

- * One rule of thumb **GO LOW and GET LOW**.
- * Go to the **lowest** level of the structure you are in.
- * If you are at home when a tornado strikes, go to the inner most part of the home on the lowest floor like a bathroom or closet with **no windows**. Crouch or lie down, cover and protect your head.
- * If you live in a mobile home, go outside, and lie flat in a ditch or ravine.

- * If you are in a office building. Go to an interior hallway

Tornadoes can pop up easily here in Texas. Would you know what to do if you were driving down the road and saw a tornado. What would you do?

- * Leave your car immediately.
- * If you have time, get inside a building.
- * If not, lie flat in a ditch or ravine, cover your head with your arms.
- * **DO NOT** take cover in your car.

Tornadoes can occur any time of the year in Texas, but the majority occur/happen during the spring and summer. They can occur during the daylight hours and at night time hours. This is why it is a good idea to keep your eyes to the sky and pay close attention to tornado watches and warnings.

Do you know the difference?

TORNADO WATCH

- * Tornado watch means “**watch**” the sky. Weather conditions are right for tornadoes to form.

TORNADO WARNING

- * Tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted or identified on radar
- * **Take COVER IMMEDIATELY**



LIGHTNING

On the average, six people die each year in Texas from lightning strikes. If you are caught outside in a thunderstorm;

- * Get inside a building **IMMEDIATELY**.

If you have to stay outside

- * Keep away from metal objects
- * Stay below ground level, away from hilltops, open beaches or fields and most important stay away from open water and tall trees.
- * Seek shelter under a thick relatively small trees.
- * Seek shelter inside your car.
- * If you feel your hair standing on end, squat with your head between your knees. **DO NOT lie flat !!!**

If you are inside

- * Avoid using the telephone, or other electrical appliances.
- * Do not take a bath, shower or stand near plumbing.
- * Lightning often strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall.
- * “Heat Lightning” is actually from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard.
- * Your chances of being struck by lightning are estimated to be 1 in 6000,000, but could be reduced even further by following safety precautions.
- * Lightning strike victims carry no electrical charge and should be attended to immediately.

Did you know that lightning kills more Americans than tornadoes and hurricanes each year? When planning camping trips, swimming, fishing, golf or other outdoor activities, stay up to date on weather conditions. Have a great and safe outdoor adventure.

FLOODING

We have all seen the TV commercials where someone driving a car goes through the most devastating storms and comes out the other side to sunshine and fun. Commer-

cials seldom show the reality, that even a four-wheel drive vehicle isn't safe in high water areas. The lifting power of a flash flood is hard for most of us to understand, but the facts are:

- * Water displaces 1,500 pounds of weight for every foot it rises.
- * If a car weights 3,000 pounds, it takes only two



feet of water to send it downstream.

- * It only takes 6 inches of water to sweep a person off their feet.
- * One foot of water can cause a compact vehicle to lose control and “**float**” away.

Once the car is swept away the vehicle may become a death trap because of the electric windows and door locks can short out when water reaches them, trapping the occupants inside.

FLOOD WATCH

- * Move your valuables to higher floors of the house.

- * Ensure that your vehicle has a full tank of gas and have you packed any items that you may need?
- * DO NOT drive through high water or flooded areas
- * Observe all warning signs and **DON'T** take any chances with your or your families life.
- * No destination or appointment is worth the loss of your life or of a loved one.
- * **DON'T** become a statistic.

STRAIGHT LINE WINDS

Straight line winds are especially dangerous. These winds are usually most prevalent in the Texas Plains Region. The agency incurs substantial damage annually to TDCJ facilities due to straight lines winds. The dangers of these



high winds are very similar to that of a tornado and the same measures should be taken.

THUNDERSTORMS

All thunderstorms are very dangerous. There are several associated dangers of thunderstorms include tornadoes, strong winds, hail, lightning, and flash flooding.

- * Thunderstorms may occur singly, in clusters, or in lines.
- * Some of the most severe occur when a single thunderstorm affects one location for an extended time.
- * Thunderstorms typically produce rain for a brief period, anywhere from 30 minutes to an hour.
- * Warm, humid conditions are highly favorable for thunderstorms development.
- * About 10 percent of thunderstorms are classified as severe-one that produces hail at least three-quarters of an inch in diame-

ter, has winds of 58 miles per hour or higher, or procedures a tornado.

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify thunderstorm hazards.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH

- * Tells you when and where severe thunderstorms are likely to occur. Watch the sky and stay tuned to a radio or television for additional information.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING

- * Issued when severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warning indicate imminent danger to life and property to these in the path of the storm.
- * **TAKE COVER IMMEDIATELY**

PREPARE FOR A THUNDESTORM

- * Remove dead or rotten trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage during the thunderstorm.
- * Remember the 30/30 lightning safety rule: Go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you can't count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

GUIDELINES FOR A THUNDERSTORM

- * Postpone outdoor activities.
- * Get inside a house, building, hard top automobile. Although you may be injured if lightning strikes the car, you are much safer inside the vehicle than outside.
- * Remember, rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning.
- * Secure outdoor objects that could blow

- away or cause damage.
- * Shutter windows and secure outside doors. If shutters are not available, close window blinds, shades, or curtains.
- * Avoid showering or bathing. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- * Use a corded telephone only for emergencies. Cordless and cellular telephones are safe to use.
- * Unplug appliances and other electrical items (computers, air conditioners).
- * Use a battery operated radio.



WILDFIRES

Each year, more than 4,000 Americans die and more than 25,000 are injured in fires, many of which could be prevented. Direct property loss to fires is estimated at \$8.6 billion annually. The threat of wildland fires for people living near wildland areas or using recreational facilities in wilderness areas is real. Dry conditions at various times of the year and in various parts of the United States greatly increase the potential for wildland fires.

Advance planning and knowing how to protect buildings in these areas can lessen the devastation of wildland fires. It is important to understand that fire spreads quickly; there is no time to gather valuables or make a phone call.

SAFE FIRE PRACTICES

- * Build fires away from nearby trees or bushes.
- * Always have a way to extinguish the fire quickly and completely.
- * Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and sleeping areas
- * Never leave a fire-even a cigarette-burning unattended

- * Avoid opening burning completely, and especially during the dry season.

Evacuation may be the only way to protect your family in a wildfire. Know where to go and plan several escapes in case roads are blocked by wildfire.

Teamwork is working together-even when apart.

Unknown

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Debbie Liles
Director, Administrative Review and Risk
Management

David Scholwinski
Program Administrator
Risk Management

Doug Odom
Audit & Inspection Manager
Risk Management

Sherilyn Epperson
Operations Manager
Risk Management

The *Training Circular*, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Design and layout of the Training Circular is performed by Sherilyn Epperson Operations Manager, Risk Management. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome. Send Suggestions to:

Sherilyn Epperson
Risk Management Department
1060 hwy 190 east
Huntsville, Texas 77340
or,
sherilyn.epperson@tdcj.state.tx.us

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