

Severe Weather Information:

There are several factors needed to address your safety. These items may occur together or independent of each other. They are:

1. Lightening
2. Rain / Flooding
3. High Winds
4. Hail
5. Tornados

It should be remembered that most weather events that occur in the area we live in are not severe by definition, but they all have the potential for reaching severe level. In order to stay informed about the severity of a weather event, you should monitor the radio, television or purchase a weather alert radio. If you have a scanner, NOAA weather radio operates off a frequency of 162.425 Mhz and is the best way to get information about watches and warnings.

There are many internet sites that are also available to gather weather information. While the City of Countryside does not endorse any of these sites, they are yet another tool for you to gather information about weather events occurring in our area.

www.nbc5.com



<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lot/>



<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>



WATCHES AND WARNINGS

Below are the general definitions used by the National Weather Service as criteria to classify a weather watch or warning:

Watch – Issued by the National Weather Service in Normal Oklahoma or a National Weather Service local office indicating that a particular weather hazard is possible, i.e., that conditions are more favorable than usual for its occurrence. A watch is a recommendation for planning, preparation, and increased awareness (i.e., to be alert for changing weather, listen for further information, and think about what to do if the danger materializes).

Warning - Issued by the National Weather Service local office indicating that a particular weather hazard is either imminent or has been reported. A warning indicates the need to take action to protect life and property. The type of hazard is reflected in the type of warning (e.g., tornado warning, blizzard warning).

In the City of Countryside, Pleasantview Fire Protection District acts as the central control point for the activation of the City's two emergency sirens. These sirens are located behind Ideal School (58th and LaGrange Road) and across from the City's E.S.D.A. office (67th and Willow Springs Road). Pleasantview will activate these sirens either at the request of an authorized representative of the City of Countryside or if a funnel cloud or tornado is sighted/confirmed within a specific geographical area surrounding the City of Countryside. If these sirens are activated, you should take immediate actions to protect yourself.



Even though the display or “light show” that lightening creates may be beautiful, this weather event had the potential of causing **SERIOUS INJURY** or even **DEATH**. Lightening can also occur far in advance of the actual storm and precautions should be taken if lightening is predicted for the area.

Lightening is caused by the storm clouds building up a negative electric charge and the ground in turn developing a positive electric charge. The air that separates the ground and clouds acts as an insulator keeping all but the most intense lightening from striking the ground. When the ground and clouds are so intensely charged, the potential for this dangerous lightening is created.

A fact: The electrical intensity of a bolt of lightening can have a charge of 100 Million volts and reach temperatures of 54,000° Fahrenheit. To put this into perspective, this temperature can be as much as 5 times hotter than the temperature of the Sun.

All lightening should be considered as having the potential for becoming dangerous, and when lightening is in the area, the following precautions should be taken:

- Stay out of, or get out of, any body of water such as a swimming pool, pond or lake.
- Seek shelter if you are in an open field, golf course, baseball or soccer field. Avoid moving to areas that are higher than the surrounding landscape.
 - **DO NOT SEEK SHELTER UNDER A TREE!** Lightening is usually attracted to the tallest object in the areas and the electric charge may then jump to the ground and strike someone that is nearby.
 - If you are in an open field and feel your hair stand on end (this is a signal that lightening is about to strike) crouch down to into a ball so you are resting on the balls of your feet. Make yourself as small of a target as you can. Do *not* lie flat on the ground.
 - If you are near your vehicle, get in! Your car will act as an excellent source of shelter.
 - Keep away from anything metal such as scooters, bicycles, motorcycles or golf carts.
- If you are inside your home, avoid using the telephone. Electrical current has been known to flow through the telephone line.
 - You should also refrain from taking a bath or shower until the storm passes. Lightening can travel through metal pipes and plumbing if they are struck by lightening.
 - In order to protect high value equipment such as a computer, you should have it plugged into a surge suppressor or to ensure safety, unplug the computer totally during a lightening event. The danger is the power surge that may occur during lightening which will affect the computer or other high priced equipment (i.e. air conditioners).

RAIN / FLOODING

Rain and flooding events can occur in conjunction with a thunderstorm, or can occur after long periods of steady rain or with heavy quick downpours. Rain is a very important part of the spring, summer and fall as it provides plant life with the necessary moisture they need to survive, and limits the possibility of brush/wild fires when enough rain falls. Flooding however occurs when rain falls at a high volume for a short period of time or when it rains moderately for an extended period of time.

In our area, flooding often occurs when the sewer system becomes overloaded and street and residential property becomes flooded. Luckily, any streams or rivers that could add to our flooding concerns do not affect Countryside but can affect the communities adjacent to our community.

Flash Flooding is often the weather event that the residents of Countryside need to be concerned with. Flash Flooding is defined as a period of time when large amounts of rain fall in the area in a very short period of time. The prediction of these Flash Flood events has improved greatly over the past years, however they can still occur with little advanced warning.

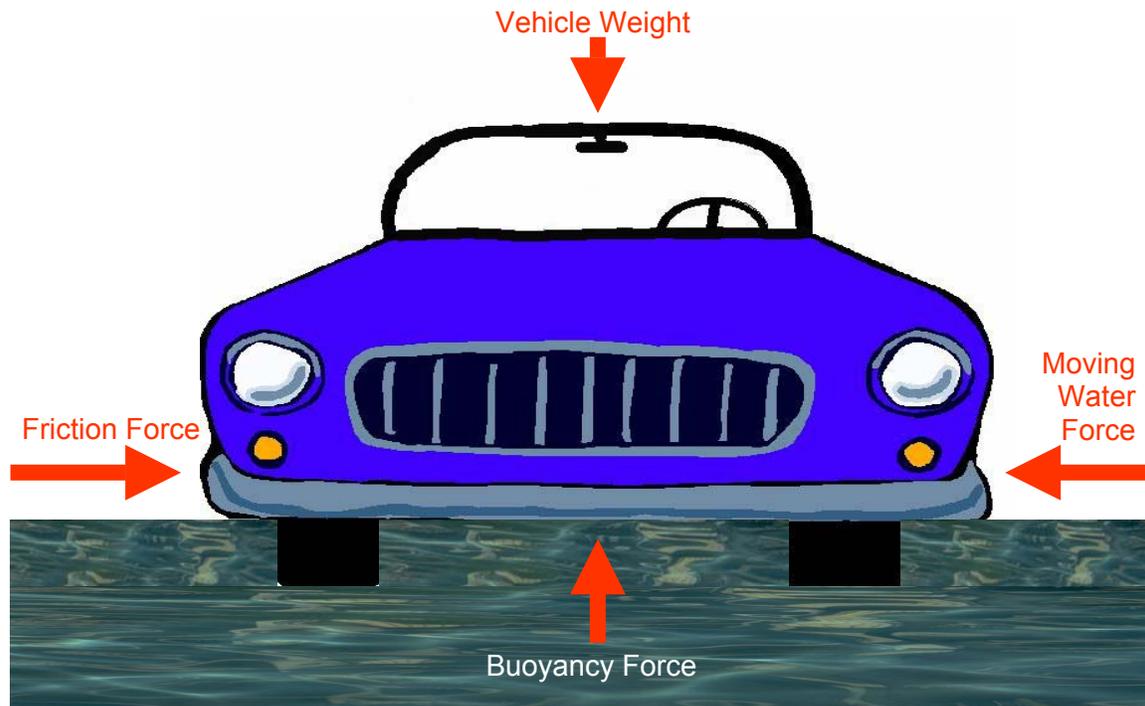
Some precautions that can be taken to protect not only your well being, but also your property are:

- If driving and you come to a large body of water on the roadway, try to avoid going through the water. The best solution would be to find and alternate route.
- If you must drive through a body of water, make sure you go slowly through the water and after clearing the water you test the brakes on your car. The braking distances required after driving through water will be significantly increased.
- When driving through water, be aware of hydroplaning. Hydroplaning occurs when the tires loose contact with the roadway and are actually riding on top of the water. This condition can result in the loss of control of your vehicle and is similar to driving on a sheet of ice.
- If at home, monitor your basement. If your basement is prone to flooding, before the event move your belongings to a higher location.
 - If water levels become high enough, the pilot light on your furnace may be extinguished. If this occurs you should know where your gas shut off is so you can stop the gas flow until the water level lowers and the pilot light can be safely re-ignited.
 - Be aware of electrical current that may be flowing in the water. **DO NOT** attempt to go into a basement that is flooded and the water level is above electrical outlets.
- If ordered to evacuate the area, take only what you may need (i.e. prescriptions, keys, clothing, identification and currency) and secure your home.



Forces on Vehicles Crossing Moving Water

Stress Force > Friction Force



HIGH WINDS

High Winds are another weather event that may or may not occur in conjunction with a thunderstorm. Winds themselves are not normally considered dangerous, the flying debris that can be blown are what pose the threat for injury or possibly even death.

High Winds have the ability to uproot trees, knock down tree branches into power lines, lift and “throw” garbage cans, rip roofing off of buildings, cause shopping carts to roll out into the street or cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

There are some simple precautions that you can take to help minimize these dangerous conditions:

Outdoors:



- Make sure garbage cans and their lids are secured.
- Never leave patio furniture pillows out when not in use and make sure your patio furniture is secured. Always make sure your patio umbrella is unopened when not in use and secured.
- Toys used by children should be picked up and bikes are not left out when not in use.
- Keep trees pruned and dead branches removed.
- Periodically have your roof checked for loose roofing tiles and have them repaired if loose tiles are found.
- During high winds, bring in any outside decorations that can catch the wind and become airborne (i.e. wind socks, musical chimes).
- NEVER approach any lines that may be knocked down or lying in the roadway. ALWAYS assume that they are “live” wires and that they have the capability of causing serious injury or death. If you come across any downed lines from a telephone/electrical pole, immediately call 9-1-1.



Indoors:

- Stay clear of picture windows. If you have blinds or drapes on the windows, you should use them to cover the window to act as a barrier. Remember it is not the wind that may cause the damage, but the flying debris.
- Make sure storm windows/screen doors or shutters are secured.

Driving:

- Watch for downed wires. ALWAYS assume that these wires are “live” and keep clear of them. DO NOT drive over any downed wires. Call 9-1-1 if you come across a downed wire.
- Watch for debris in the roadway. Use extra caution and keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.
- Listen to the radio or television to see if there are any trailer bans in affect. A trailer ban is put in affect because winds may make controlling vehicles with a trailer difficult, or the winds may be high enough to uplift and roll over the trailer while you are driving.
- Traffic signals may not be operating properly. Approach intersections with extra care. If lights are inoperable, treat the intersection as a 4-way stop, come to a complete stop and then proceed with caution.

HAIL

Hail usually occurs in strong or severe thunderstorms. Hail often does not cause personal injury, but it, along with the previous conditions, can become dangerous and are typically the costliest weather element to affect the United States but hail still does have the potential for causing injury or death.

Hail varies in sizes often classified as the following: pea (1/4"), penny (3/4"), quarter (1"), half dollar (1-1/4"), golf ball (1-3/4"), tennis ball (2-1/2"), baseball (2-3/4"), grapefruit (4").

Hail classified as tennis ball size or larger (2" or more) can reach speed of 100 miles per hour as they fall to earth and typically causes over \$1 billion dollars in damage to livestock, crops and roofs.

As with all weather events, there are some basic precautions that can be taken to minimize the impact of this weather event:

- If you are at home, stay away from windows, Hail can be blown by the wind and act as a projectile that will break a window. As with high winds, make sure your blinds or drapes are closed to act as a barrier to the glass and yourself.
- If you are outdoors, seek a place of shelter, such as a building or other structure.
- An automobile can be used as a place of shelter, however if hail reaches the size of golf balls (1-3/4" diameter) this can cause damage to windshields or the vehicles body and paint.



Various sized Hail



4" diameter Hail



Damaged windshield of a car by hail



A tornado is perhaps the worst weather related event that can happen in this area of Illinois. Tornadoes are usually found in the most severe storms and are often accompanied by hail. A tornado is indirectly related to a hurricane, as they are both the results of unstable air rotating around the center of low pressure. A tornado does differ from a hurricane by the fact that they are *usually* short lived and are concentrated into a funnel or funnels that are 55 to 550 yards in diameter.

Winds associated with a tornado have never been accurately measured, but have been estimated at 150 to over 225 miles per hour.

By definition, a funnel cloud is not a tornado until it has made contact with the ground. A funnel does not have to physically touch the ground though to be called a tornado. If debris is being moved in a circular motion below the funnel, it can then be classified as a tornado. A funnel cloud/tornado move at variable speeds and have the ability to “skip” along the landscape as they move in a Northeasterly direction. It must be noted that these are general conditions, however a funnel/tornado can move in any direction and can be associated with a “swarm” of funnel clouds and have occurred in all 50 states.

Tornadoes have the ability to cause mass destruction and personal injury. Tornadoes damage can also be very random in nature. Extensive or total destruction can occur to one home, yet the adjacent home only suffers minimal damage. While the prediction and early warning of severe weather and tornadoes has gotten much better over the past years, the best way to protect yourself is to become educated of what to look and listen for.

Here are some precautions and safety issues to prepare yourself:

- Listen for weather alerts either on television or radio. All major broadcast channels are very effective at getting the word out to the public about severe weather events occurring in our area. On the radio, WBBM 780 AM and WGN 720 AM are good media outlets.
- Purchase a weather alert radio. This will allow for warning alerts and to monitor NOAA weather radio. If you own a police/fire scanner, you can program in NOAA Weather Radio at a frequency of 162.425Mhz.
- A **TORNADO WATCH** means that the conditions are favorable for the formation or development of funnel clouds or tornadoes.
- A **TORNADO WARNING** means that a funnel cloud/tornado has been spotted and confirmed and that *immediate* shelter should be sought.

If at home:

- Move to the basement or lowest level of the house and cover yourself with a blanket to protect yourself from flying debris under a sturdy object (i.e. a workbench).
- If you do not have a basement, move to an interior room such as a bathroom that preferably does not have any windows. If you use a bathroom, get into the tub and cover yourself with a blanket.



Weather Radio

In a Mobile Home:

- Seek shelter in a building or other strong structure. Mobile homes, even if strapped down, will not provide you with adequate shelter if a tornado comes through. Most mobile home parks have either a main building or a laundry facility that could be used as shelter.
- If not shelter is present, get out of the mobile home and seek shelter by lying flat in a ditch, ravine or depression. You should cover your body, especially your head, but make sure you are also aware of your surrounding for the potential of rising water.

In a vehicle:

- DO NOT try to outrun a tornado. Immediately seek shelter!
- Seek shelter in a building or other strong structure.
- If no shelter is present, get out of the vehicle and seek shelter by lying flat in a ditch, ravine or depression. You should cover your body, especially your head, but make sure you are also aware of your surroundings for the potential of rising water.
- If on the interstate, DO NOT seek shelter at an under/over pass. These structures actually act as wind tunnels and increase the speed of the winds and debris.

At School or Work:

- Follow the instructions of the school authorities or building management.
- Move to an inner wall that is away from windows.
- Stay out of areas that have large/wide span roofs. Typical examples of these areas are gymnasiums or auditoriums.

After the tornado has passed, DO NOT go out driving around to “survey” the damage. Roads need to be kept clear for emergency personnel and equipment to respond to the area and to assist your fellow neighbors.

If you smell gas, do not light any fires and attempt to shut off the gas supply to your home. If you are unable to shut off the gas supply, report it to the Police or Fire Department.



A damaged house after a tornado
Note the bathroom is still somewhat intact



This is a steel Stop Sign post twisted by the winds of a Tornado
The Stop Sign was no where to be found

In any of these weather events, the resources of your local Police, Fire or E.S.D.A. agency may be “stretched” and you should be prepared to help yourself immediately following the weather event. There are some basic steps you can take to prepare in advance to help prepare yourself:

Keep the following supplies in an easy to carry container:

- First Aid kit with any prescription medications needed (do not store the prescription drugs for long periods of time)
- A battery powered radio (check the batteries every three months)
- A battery powered flashlight (check the batteries every three months)
- A supply of non-perishable foods (don't forget a can opener if canned goods)
- A supply of bottled drinking water (check the expiration date every three months)
- A change of clothing, including shoes and rain gear
- Blankets or sleeping bag
- A small amount of cash
- An inventory of your house (for insurance purposes, a video is also a good record to keep of your houses contents)
- Extra sets of keys
- A list of phone numbers of family members or other contacts
- A pair of heavy gloves
- Basic tools that includes a hammer, adjustable wrench, pliers, rope, tape and wire
- Portable fire extinguisher

In preparing for any disaster, as a family you should discuss a disaster plan that the family can use if needed. That plan should include a designated contact person, either in another town/city or state, which can be the central contact person for the entire family. Make sure you include that person in your disaster plan and outline their function in the plan. This person will act as the central contact in case your family becomes separated from each other and will be a place for the family to check in with.

While the City of Countryside provides these as only suggestions for preparing for an emergency, it is up to each and every member of the family to become educated about emergency preparedness at home, work and school. REMEMBER, a disaster can happen at any time and at any place so always be prepared to take actions to protect yourself.

For additional information about family disaster preparedness the American Red Cross has a very informative web site www.redcross.org and click on the Disaster Services tab or contact City of Countryside's Emergency Services and Disaster Agency.