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How to Stay Safe When Lightning Strikes

Every year, lightning strikes in the United States nearly [25 million times](#). Although only a small percentage of these encounters results in a human fatality, lightning is no joke: A single bolt can carry up to [1 billion volts](#) of electricity, which can injure individuals, damage property or even start a blazing fire when conditions are dry.

That's why it's important to take safety precautions whether you're indoors or caught outside in the middle of a storm. Here are a few tips to help keep you protected:

Be prepared ahead of time. If you live in an area prone to thunderstorms, make sure your home is equipped to withstand the lightning, strong winds and even hail that are often associated with them. This article offers advice on some of the [modifications](#) you can make to your home to help protect it when the thunder starts rolling in. For example, installing a lightning rod will protect against a power surge should lightning strike your home.

Stay centered, and avoid electronic equipment. If lightning is nearby – meaning there are fewer than [30 seconds](#) between the time you see a flash and hear a clap of thunder – avoiding windows and doorways by staying as close to the center of your home as possible will help keep you safe. The [Centers for Disease Control](#) also recommend staying away from plugged-in electronic equipment and power cords. The CDC also advises avoiding sinks and shower faucets, since electrical currents from lightning can travel through plumbing.

Pull over and get inside a building. Many people think it's safe to drive when lightning is present because they believe a vehicle's rubber tires will protect them from harm. However, [this is a myth](#). The metal cages of cars can pick up electrical currents, whether the car itself is struck

or the ground below it is. If you're out driving, your best bet is to get out of your car and into a sturdy structure as soon as it's safe to do so.

Take cover as soon as possible. One way to detect if lightning is dangerously near to you is by observing the static electricity in the air around you. The [National Geographic Society](#) notes that if you are outdoors while a storm looms on the horizon and your hair begins to stand on end, that's a dangerous sign that it's time to head indoors. Inside or outside, you can also rely on Fido to indicate how close lightning is to you: [Studies suggest](#) that dogs are particularly sensitive to the increase in static electricity during a storm, and can pick up on it much sooner than people can.

Lightning is an awesome force that can certainly cause damage to anything – or anyone – it comes into contact with. But by taking action before and during a storm, you can protect yourself, your loved ones and your home from harm.

Sara Bell grew up in a family of teachers – her dad has taught high school for 30 years and her mom is a university professor. At Educator Labs, she puts the lessons they instilled in her about the importance of curiosity and learning to great use. When she isn't working, she enjoys reading, writing, and knitting.