THUNDERSTORMS AND LIGHTNING:

WHAT IS A THUNDERSTORM?

- A thunderstorm is formed from a combination of moisture, rapidly rising warm air, and a force capable of lifting air such as a warm or cold front, a sea breeze or a mountain.

THUNDERSTORM FACTS:

- Thunderstorms may occur singly, in clusters, or in lines.
- Thunderstorms are classified as severe if it produces hail at least ¾ of inch diameter, has winds of 58 miles per hour or higher, or produces a tornado.
- All thunderstorms contain lightning. The rapid heating and cooling of air near the lightning causes thunder.

WHAT IS LIGHTNING?

- Lightning is an electrical discharge that results from the buildup of positive and negative charges within a thunderstorm. When the buildup becomes strong enough, lightning appears as a bolt.
- If you van near thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck by lightning.

LIGHTNING FACTS:

- A bolt of lightning reaches a temperature approaching 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit in a split second.
- It is a myth that lightning never strikes twice in the same place. In fact, lightning will strike several times in the same place in the course of one discharge.
- Remember the 30/30 lightning safety rule: go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for at least 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

- Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide no protection from lightning. However, the steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal.

DANGER ZONES:

- While thunderstorms and lightning can be found throughout the U.S. they are most likely to occur in the central and southern states.
- The state with the highest number of thunderstorms is Florida.

KNOW THE TERMS:

- **SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH –** Issued when conditions are favorable for the formation of severe thunderstorms.
- **SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING –** Issued when a severe thunderstorm has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.

WARNING AND DANGER SIGNS:

- Look for darkening skies, flashes of light, the sound of thunder, or increasing wind.

ACTIONS TO CONSIDERER BEFORE A THUNDERSTORM:

- Secure outdoor objects such as lawn furniture and take light objects inside.
- Survey around your home and remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER DURING A THUNDERSTORM:

IF INDOORS:

- Do not handle any electrical equipment or corded telephones because lightning could follow the wire. Television sets are particularly dangerous at this time.
- Avoid bathtubs, water faucets, and sinks because metal pipes can transmit electricity.
- Turn off air conditioner.
- Draw blinds and shades over windows.

IF OUTDOORS:

- If you are boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter immediately! Attempt to get into a building or car. If no structure is available, get to an open space and squat low to the ground as quickly as possible.
- If in the woods, find an area protected by a low clump of trees-never stand underneath a single large tree in the open.
- Avoid tall structures such as towers, fences, telephone lines, or power lines.
- Stay away from natural lightning rods such as golf clubs, tractors, fishing rods, bicycles, etc.
- If you feel your hair stand on end (which may indicate that lightning is about to strike you), bend forward, putting your hands on your knees. A position with feet together and crouching while removing all metal objects is recommended. Do not lie on the ground.

IF IN A VEHICLE:

- Pull safely onto the shoulder of the road away from any trees that could possibly fall on your vehicle, turn on your emergency flashers and stay in your vehicle.

STUCK BY LIGHTNING:

- People struck by lightning carry no electrical charge and can be handled safely. Have someone dial 9-1-1. If the victim is burned, provide first aid and call emergency medical assistance immediately. Look for burns where lightning entered and exited the body. If the strike caused the victim's heart and breathing to stop, provide CPR until medical professionals arrive and take over.

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER AFTER A THUNDERSTORM:

- Call 9-1-1 to report life-threatening emergencies ONLY.
- Help your neighbors who may require special assistance-infants, elderly, and people with disabilities.
- Drive only as necessary. Debris and washed-out roads may make driving dangerous.
- Report property damage to your insurance agent immediately.