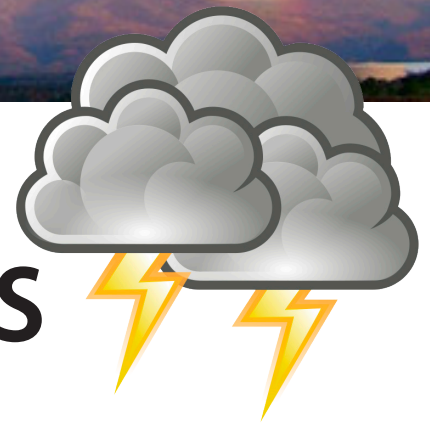




# LIGHTNING & THUNDERSTORMS



## *the local scoop*

Northern New Mexico's rainy season is July and August. Los Alamos experiences an average of **61 THUNDERSTORM DAYS** a year, some of which are called **MONSOONS** (predictable afternoon rainstorms). Because of the eastward slope of the terrain, White Rock receives noticeably less annual precipitation than the official observing station at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The average precipitation for Los Alamos County is **18.7 INCHES** per year.

**LIGHTNING**—visible electrical discharge—is usually (but not always) accompanied by rain and occurs everywhere in Los Alamos County. Not all lightning causes damages, although lightning in Los Alamos County has been known to cause wildfires.

### **LIKELIHOOD OF FUTURE OCCURRENCES:** High.

Severe weather, including monsoons, thunderstorms, hail, and lightning are well-documented seasonal occurrence that will continue to occur in Los Alamos County.

### **BEFORE:**

- Restock your **EMERGENCY KIT** (enough food, water, and other supplies—such as a first-aid kit and flashlights—to last for at least 72 hours).
- Make a **FAMILY COMMUNICATION PLAN** in case your family is not together when the storm occurs. Decide how you will contact one another and how you will get back together.
- Remove dead or rotting **TREES AND BRANCHES** that could fall and cause injury or damage during a severe thunderstorm.
- **POSTPONE OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.**
- **SECURE** outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- **GET INSIDE** a home, building, or hard top automobile (not a convertible). Although you may be injured if lightning strikes your car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside.
- Remember, 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.
- Shutter windows and **SECURE** outside doors. If shutters are not available, close window blinds, shades or curtains.
- Unplug any **ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT** well before the storm arrives.

### **DURING:**

Your chances of being struck by lightning are estimated to be **1 IN 600,000** but could be reduced even further by following safety precautions.

- Use a battery-operated **NOAA WEATHER RADIO** for updates.
- Avoid contact with corded **PHONES** and devices that are plugged in and charging. Cordless and wireless phones not connected to wall outlets are OK to use.
- Avoid contact with electrical equipment. **UNPLUG APPLIANCES** and other electrical items such as computers, and turn off air

conditioners. Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage.

- Avoid contact with **PLUMBING**. Do not wash your hands, take a shower, wash dishes, or do laundry. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- Stay away from windows and doors and off porches.
- Do not lie or lean against **CONCRETE** surfaces.
- If you are in an open area, go to a **LOW PLACE** such as a ravine or valley. Avoid natural lightning rods such as tall, isolated trees in open areas. Be alert for flash floods.
- Avoid hilltops, open fields, the beach, or boats on the water.
- If you are in **OPEN WATER**, get to land, and find shelter immediately.
- Take shelter in a sturdy building. Avoid isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.
- Avoid contact with anything **METAL**—tractors, farm equipment, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, and bicycles.
- If you are **DRIVING**, exit the roadway and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on the emergency flashers. Avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity.
- If you are in a forest, seek shelter in a low area

below a thick growth of small trees.

#### **AFTER:**

If lightning strikes a person, **CALL 911**. Lightning strike victims carry no electrical charge and should be attended to immediately. Check the following when you attempt to give aid to a strike victim:

- If **BREATHING** has stopped, begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- If the **HEART** has stopped, administer CPR.
- If the victim has a **PULSE** and is breathing, look for other possible injuries. Check for burns where the lightning entered and left the body. Also be alert for nervous system damage, broken bones, and loss of hearing and eyesight.

After the storm passes remember to:

- Never drive through a **FLOODED ROADWAY**.
- Stay away from storm-damaged areas to keep from putting yourself at risk of danger.
- Monitor **LOCAL MEDIA** for updated information and instructions.
- Help people who might require special assistance (infants, children, the elderly, etc.)
- Stay away from **DOWNED POWER LINES**, and report them immediately.
- Watch your **ANIMALS** closely. Keep them under your direct control.

*For more, please visit [losalamosnm.us/emo/pages/thunderstormsafety.aspx](https://www.losalamosnm.us/emo/pages/thunderstormsafety.aspx) or [ready.gov/thunderstorms-lightning](https://www.ready.gov/thunderstorms-lightning)*

