

Spring Weather Safety

Each year thousands of Americans are affected by spring weather. Alabama is no exception and certainly has some of the wildest spring weather events. An average year sees about 90 people killed due to flash floods. This is more than tornadoes, which sees 55-60 people killed each year. Flooded streams and low-lying areas are especially dangerous because of two factors. One, people tend to underestimate the power of water and two, the depth of the water can not always be determined. Did you know that 12 inches of rushing water could sweep away small cars and water only six inches deep can sweep a person off of their feet? **Turn around don't drown!**

When someone thinks of "tornado alley" they usually think of Kansas and Oklahoma but did you know that the stretch of Mississippi around Meridian and Laurel on into the Alabama counties of Hale, Green, and Sumter have more tornadoes than in the mid-west. In fact, the tornadoes in this part of the country are contrasted by the tornadoes in the mid-west by several factors. The tornadoes in this part of the country usually move across the ground twice as fast as those in the mid-west and they usually occur in the evening hours after a day of atmospheric heating. Also, the tornadoes that occur here are usually rain shrouded and can also be blocked by trees and mountains. All of these factors tend to make the tornadoes more dangerous. **Get weather ready BEFORE tornadoes strike!**

All thunderstorms have lightning. The lightning is what gives the storm its thunder. Most people who are killed each year due to lightning are male between the ages of 15-40 and occur during the spring and summer months. **When thunder roars go indoors!**

In order to be properly prepared for spring weather, the National Weather Service (NWS) along with FEMA recommends that you and your family maintain a 72-hour disaster kit as well as a family communications plan. You should also make sure that you and your family have practiced the plan and made sure you know how to use the equipment in your 72-hour kit.



If you work in one of the many labs here at UAB make sure all critical equipment is plugged into emergency power. Emergency power outlets are designated by red plugs. Also, if your lab is in a lower floor or basement of a building flooding could be a potential issue. If your lab has windows you need to pay particular attention to the risk of glass breaking when tornadoes and high winds occur. Additional resources for helping you prepare your lab can be found at uab.edu/ohs.

Very good information can be found through the NWS and at uab.edu/emergency. Twitter users can #springsafety for more information.

Be a force of nature and stay weather aware!