

Storms



Top tips, and vital advice on how to protect yourself.

Community activities to make sure everyone stays safe.

How to prepare, what to do during and what to do after.

Foreword

Across the UK, communities are facing the growing impacts of extreme weather — from prolonged heatwaves and flash flooding to severe cold spells and storms. These events are becoming more frequent and intense due to the climate crisis, posing serious risks to health, safety, and infrastructure, and causing significant disruption to everyday life.

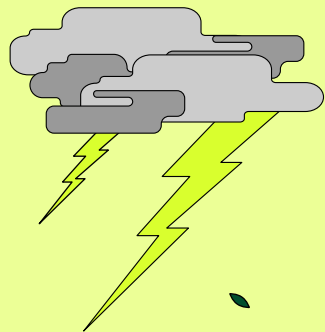
This information pack has been developed through a collaboration between the University of Leeds, London Resilience Unit (Greater London Authority), the ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre, and Climate Action Leeds. It is designed to consolidate existing local and national government guidance to support individuals, households and communities in preparing for and responding to extreme weather, wherever they live in the UK.

It is essential to recognise that we are all vulnerable to extreme weather. However, the degree to which we are affected depends on our individual, social, and economic circumstances. Factors such as age, where we live, existing physical and mental health conditions (including neurodivergence, such as autism and ADHD), access to public services, the support we receive from our social networks, and our sense of connection to others in the community all influence how vulnerable we are to different types of extreme weather.

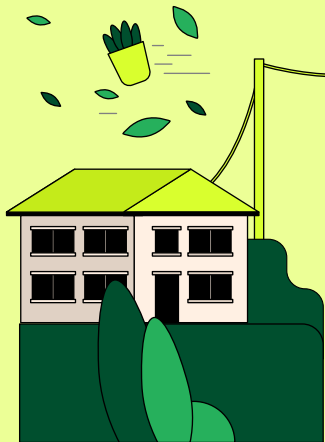
We hope this pack will serve not only as a source of information, but also as a tool to raise awareness about the impacts of the climate crisis and to encourage individuals, households and communities to collaborate, support one another, and take action to prepare for and cope with extreme weather.

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High winds, heavy rainfall, and falling debris present immediate risks to life and property.



Introduction

Storms in the UK are becoming more severe and disruptive. During the 2023–2024 storm season, there were up to 14 named storms. These caused at least 13 excess deaths (meaning more people died than usual for that time of year), widespread flooding, damage to roads and buildings, power cuts, and major losses for farmers.

High winds, heavy rainfall, and falling debris present immediate risks to life and property, while also disrupting transport networks, communication systems, and essential public services. Storms can trigger trauma, anxiety, and stress – especially when they cause displacement, communication breakdowns, or delays in emergency response.

Rural and coastal communities, residents of older or poorly maintained buildings, and individuals with disabilities or neurodivergent conditions face heightened risks during storms.

For example, people with autism may experience sensory overload from loud winds, sirens, or sudden changes in routine, while those with ADHD might find it challenging to follow emergency instructions or prepare in advance. These factors can make it harder to stay safe and access support during extreme weather events.

Disruption to transport and communication systems can further isolate vulnerable individuals and households.

Coastal areas and upland regions in Scotland, Wales, and the South-West are particularly exposed to storm-related hazards. Many people lack access to storm alerts, emergency kits, or safe shelter plans.



Click here or the follow the link below to visit the MetOffice for storm warnings and advice.
weather.metoffice.gov.uk/warnings-and-advice

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What to do before

Preparing your home for a storm can reduce disruption and risks like loose items blowing away, power cuts, and water damage. For neurodivergent people, use a simple checklist, keep steps visible, and plan for sensory needs (e.g. ear defenders for loud winds). A calm space and a check-in plan with someone you trust can also help.

• Check for loose items outside your home and plan how you could secure them in high winds: ◦ bins, ◦ plant pots, ◦ garden furniture (bring inside or secure in place), ◦ trampolines (turn upside down or secure with tent pegs), ◦ sheds (ensure doors are locked). • Lightning can cause sudden power surges. To stay safe, unplug any devices you don't need, unless you already use a surge protector (a device that helps stop damage from sudden spikes in electricity). • Prepare for a potential power cut. Charge phones and power banks, and keep a torch with spare batteries. Write down important numbers in case your phone battery dies.	• Keeping your guttering well maintained and clear of debris can help keep rain from causing any further damage to your home. • Check the condition of your roof for any loose tiles or sections which may cause issues in high winds and heavy rain. • Make sure your pets have a safe space indoors. • Think about sensory needs: Have ear defenders or noise-reducing headphones ready if loud winds or sirens are stressful. • Create a calm space: Choose a quiet room where you can feel safe during the storm. • Check travel plans: Avoid unnecessary journeys and know alternative routes if roads are blocked.	 Check for loose items outside your home and plan how you could secure them in high winds.
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What to do during

During a storm, it's important to stay safe and, if possible, check on neighbours or people in your community to make sure they are okay. Avoid using electrical devices you don't need. This helps reduce the risk of damage during power cuts or lightning strikes.

• If there is a powercut: ◦ Switch off appliances that shouldn't be left on when the power returns. ◦ Leave one light on so you know when the power is back. ◦ Check on neighbours to make sure they are safe. If they have power and you don't, your trip switch may have turned off. ◦ Keep warm: wear extra layers and close inside doors to keep heat in. ◦ Use portable heaters safely if your main heating isn't working. ◦ Call 105 for updates – it's a free service in England, Scotland, and Wales.	• Do not go outside to repair damage while the storm is happening. • Avoid being outside in lightning. If you hear thunder, you are already close enough to be struck. Stay indoors as much as possible. • If you are outside and hear thunder, find a safe enclosed shelter, like a car. Do not shelter under trees or near tall structures. Move to lower ground if you are on a hill. • Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from the storm, so stay inside until you haven't heard thunder for at least 30 minutes. • Avoid using landline phones unless it's an emergency, as telephone lines can carry electricity.	• Avoid metal objects that can attract lightning, such as golf clubs, fishing rods, umbrellas, bikes, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, pushchairs, wire fences, and metal rails. If you are in a tent, stay away from the metal poles. • If you are caught in the open: ◦ Stay away from trees and buildings. ◦ Crouch down low in a ball-like position with your head tucked in and hands over your ears. Do this immediately if you feel your hair stand on end. ◦ Keep as little of your body touching the ground as possible. ◦ Stay away from anything that conducts electricity.
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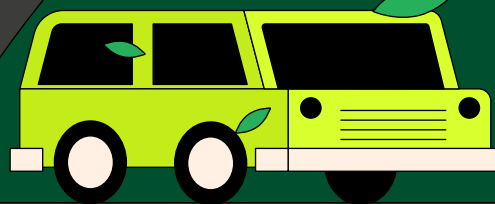
Driving during a storm

The Met Office advises against unnecessary travel during severe weather, especially to remote or coastal areas where conditions can deteriorate rapidly.

- Plan your route, check for delays and road closures – try use main roads.
- Listen out for travel updates on your car radio/sat nav.
- If you don't have essentials in your car then pack for the worst (warm clothing, food, drink, blanket, torch).
- Take a fully charged mobile phone with an in-car charger or battery pack.
- Use dipped headlights.
- Slow down and give yourself more time to react on slippery surfaces, keeping a bigger gap between vehicles and give vulnerable road users including cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians more room than usual. They are more likely to be blown around by side winds.
- Be aware that current can travel through other parts of many modern cars, including GPS and radio systems. Including metal interior handles, foot pedals and steering wheels.
- Cars can be damaged both internally and externally by lightning strikes.



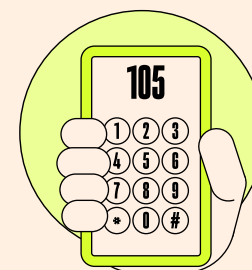
Click here or visit the link below to find out more
[weather.metoffice.gov.uk/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/stay-safe-in-a-thunderstorm](https://www.weather.metoffice.gov.uk/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice/stay-safe-in-a-thunderstorm)



What to do after

After a storm there's increased risk of hazards around your home and local area, often caused by high winds and rain from the passing storm. You should proceed with caution when venturing back outside.

- Avoid downed power lines or broken cables.
- If someone is struck by lightning, they often suffer severe burns. The strike also affects the heart, so check if they have a pulse.
- Stay indoors until the storm has fully passed and it is safe to go outside.
- Check for damage to your home, especially roofs, windows, and outdoor structures.
- Report hazards like fallen power lines.
- Avoid floodwater and debris, which may hide hazards or be contaminated.
- Use torches instead of candles during power cuts to reduce fire risk.
- Check on neighbours, especially those who are elderly or isolated.
- Secure loose items outside your home to prevent further damage in case of follow-up storms.



Call 105 for information, it's a free service for people in England, Scotland and Wales.

Additional Sources of Information

The development of this information pack was funded by the University of Leeds Research Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) Fund and is a collaboration between the University of Leeds, the London Resilience Unit, the ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre, and Climate Action Leeds.

The London Resilience Unit is part of the Greater London Authority, and delivers and coordinates resilience services on behalf of the London Resilience Partnership and London Local Authorities.

The research underpinning this project, Policing and community resilience in the context of climate change, was funded by the ESRC Vulnerability and Policing Futures Research Centre.

The final report for the project can be accessed here: vulnerabilitypolicing.org.uk/policing-and-community-resilience-in-the-context-of-climate-change/

- **The London Community Resilience Toolkit**
londonemergenciestrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/London-Community-Resilience-Toolkit-2025_0.pdf
- **UK Government: Prepare for emergencies**
prepare.campaign.gov.uk/
- **Leeds City Council: Heat in the City**
observatory.leeds.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Director-of-Public-Health-Annual-Report-2025-Heat-in-the-city.pdf
- **Met Office: Seasonal advice**
weather.metoffice.gov.uk/warnings-and-advice/seasonal-advice
- **Would you survive 72 hours?**
72tuntia.fi/en/
- **BeFloodReady**
www.befloodready.uk/
- **Communities Prepared**
www.communitiesprepared.org.uk/