

Monsoon Safety Tips

Before a Storm

- Always be aware of the day's forecast and keep up to date on changing conditions during the day. Monsoons can develop quickly and move rapidly.
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage.
- Have extra light and power handy. Keep batteries, flashlights and a battery-operated radio or TV on hand to keep you up to date during severe weather.
- Create an emergency preparedness plan and kit.

During a Storm

Lightning

- Lightning often strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur as far as 10 miles away from any rainfall. Remember that it does not have to be raining for you to be struck by lightning. If you hear thunder, you are close enough to a storm to be struck by lightning.
- Stay off the phone. Even cordless phones can cause a shock when lightning strikes nearby. Use cell phones only if necessary.
- Avoid contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- Keep away from windows.
- If you are caught outdoors in a thunderstorm, and safe shelter is not available, find a low spot away from trees, fences, and poles. Avoid high ground, water, trees and metal objects.

Wind

- Thunderstorm wind gusts in Arizona almost always exceed 40 mph. The strongest straight line wind gusts can exceed 100 mph, and can produce damage similar to a tornado!
- Secure outdoor objects that could blow away or cause damage. This includes garbage cans, umbrellas, patio furniture and any other unsecure items around your yard.
- Stay away from windows
- Stay away from trees. Many people are killed or injured in severe thunderstorms by falling trees, flying debris, or from downed power lines.
- Never touch a downed power line, even if it appears dead. Assume that it is live. Call for help instead.

Dust Storms

- Dust Storms move rapidly and can reduce visibility almost instantly. Dust storms will usually appear well ahead of thunderstorms, be aware of the current weather situation even if you don't see storms nearby.
- If you encounter a dust storm, pull off the road immediately. Turn off your headlights and taillights, put your vehicle in "PARK," and take your foot off the brake. Other motorists may tend

to follow taillights in an attempt to get through the dust storm, and may strike your vehicle from behind.

- Stay where you are until the dust storm passes.
- Do not go out in a dust storm if you can avoid it.

Flash Floods

- Control of a vehicle can be lost in as little as 6 inches of water. Most vehicles will begin to float in 2 feet of water. It is very difficult, especially at night, to discern the depth or force of flowing water. What may seem like a shallow stream may have unseen depth or may be flowing much faster under the surface.
- The way to prevent becoming trapped or swept away by flowing water is to not drive through it.
- Find an alternate route whenever available, even if it takes extra time out of your day. If no alternative route is available, wait it out. Arizona's monsoons are usually fast moving and temporary.
- In 1995, Arizona created the "Stupid Motorist Law" to encourage Arizona drivers to use common sense when it comes to driving through flooded areas. The Law specifically bans drivers from driving around barricades in place to prevent them from driving through a flooded area. Drivers trapped after driving around barricades may be responsible paying the cost incurred by police and fire emergency personnel.
- Beware of distant thunderstorms, especially if they're over mountains. Flash flooding can occur many miles away from the thunderstorm as the runoff flows into the valleys and deserts.
- Hikers and mountain bikers should try to get out earlier in the day to avoid the dangers of not only flash flooding, but also lightning. Wherever you are hiking during the monsoon, be aware of your escape routes, follow ranger instructions, and be prepared to move to higher ground quickly.