

Severe Storms

Thunderstorms, hail, blizzards, ice storms, high winds and heavy rain can develop quickly and threaten life and property. Severe storms occur in all regions of Canada and in all seasons.

Listen to the local radio or television stations for severe weather warnings and advice. Keep a battery-powered or wind-up radio on hand as there can be power outages during severe storms.

Types of storms

Blizzards

- A blizzard, in general, is when winds of 40 km/h or greater are expected to cause widespread reductions in visibility to 400 metres or less, due to blowing snow, or blowing snow in combination with falling snow, for at least four hours.
- Blizzards come in on a wave of cold arctic air, bringing snow, bitter cold, high winds and poor visibility in blowing snow. While these conditions must last for at least four hours to be designated a blizzard, they may last for several days.
- Poor visibility, low temperatures and high winds combine to create a significant hazard.
- In Canada, blizzards with high winds are most common in the Prairies, eastern Arctic and eastern Ontario.
- Heavy snowfalls are most common in British Columbia, the Atlantic provinces, southern and eastern Quebec and areas around the Great Lakes.
- Freezing rain can occur pretty much anywhere in the country, but is particularly common in Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic provinces.

Hail

- Hailstorms occur across Canada, though they are most frequent in Alberta, the southern Prairies and in southern Ontario.
- Hailstorms occur mostly from May to October.
- Parts of the Prairies can expect up to 10 hailstorms a year.
- For farmers whose crops are crushed, and for others whose homes and cars are damaged, a hailstorm can be a financial disaster.
- Some hailstones are the size of peas while others can be as big as grapefruits.

Heavy rain

- Heavy rainfall can result in flooding. This is particularly true when the ground is still frozen or already saturated from previous storms.
- [Floods](#) may also result, especially if heavy rain coincides with the spring thaw.

Ice storms

- Freezing rain is tough, clings to everything it touches and is more slippery than snow.
- A little freezing rain is dangerous, a lot can be catastrophic.

Lightning

- Lightning occurs when the air becomes charged with electricity during a thunderstorm.
- Bolts of lightning travel at about 40,000 kilometres per second.

Thunderstorms

- Thunderstorms are often accompanied by high winds, hail, lightning, heavy rain and tornadoes.
- Thunderstorms are usually over within an hour, although a series of thunderstorms can last for several hours.

Wind

- Strong winds, and especially gusty winds, can cause property damage or turn any loose item into a dangerous projectile, and create unsafe travelling conditions that affect your ability to safely steer your car.
- When there is a wind warning for your area, you should expect inland winds to be blowing steadily at 60-65 km/h or more, or winds that are gusting up to 90 km/h or more. Secure or put away loose objects such as outdoor furniture or garbage cans, put your car in the garage, and bring livestock to shelter.
- With winds between 60 and 70 km/h, you will have difficulty with balance and walking against the wind. Twigs and small branches could also blow off trees and cause a hazard, so stay inside until it is safe.