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Hail:

What you Need to Know

What is hail?

Hail is a form of precipitation consisting of solid ice that forms inside thunderstorm updrafts. Hail can damage aircraft, homes, and cars, and can be deadly to livestock and people.

How does hail form?

Hailstones are formed when raindrops are carried upward by thunderstorm updrafts into extremely cold areas of the atmosphere and freeze. Hailstones then grow by colliding with liquid water drops that freeze onto the hailstone's surface. If the water freezes instantaneously when colliding with the hailstone, cloudy ice will form as air bubbles will be trapped in the newly formed ice. However, if the water freezes slowly, the air bubbles can escape, and the new ice will be clear. The hail falls when the thunderstorm's updraft can no longer support the weight of the hailstone, which can occur if the stone becomes large enough or the updraft weakens.

How does hail fall to the ground?

Hail falls when it becomes heavy enough to overcome the strength of the thunderstorm updraft and is pulled toward the earth by gravity. Smaller hailstones can be blown away from the updraft by horizontal winds, so larger hail typically falls closer to the updraft than smaller hail. If the winds near the surface are strong enough, hail can fall at an angle or even nearly sideways! Wind-driven hail can tear up siding on buildings, break windows and blow into houses, break side windows on cars, and cause severe injury and/or death to people and animals.

Preparing for a hailstorm is crucial to protect yourself, your property, and your vehicles. Here are some steps you can take:

Before the Storm

1. **Check Weather Alerts:** Stay informed by monitoring weather forecasts and alerts through your local news or weather apps.
2. **Secure Outdoor Items:** Bring in or secure any outdoor furniture, decorations, or equipment that could be damaged or blown around.



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3. Protect Vehicles:

- **Garage:** If possible, park vehicles in a garage or covered area.
- **Use Blankets:** If you can't park inside, cover your vehicle with blankets hail covers to minimize damage.

4. Inspect Your Facility:

- **Windows and Doors:** Close and secure all windows and doors to prevent damage.
- **Check Roof:** Inspect your roof for any vulnerabilities (loose shingles, etc.) before the storm hits.

5. Trim Trees:

Cut back any overhanging branches that could fall on your house or vehicle.

During the Storm

1. **Stay Indoors:** Remain inside a sturdy building and avoid windows to prevent injury from shattered glass.
2. **Seek Shelter:** If you are in a vehicle and can't reach shelter, find a sturdy building. If that's not possible, stay in your car with the windows rolled up and cover your head.
3. **Stay Informed:** Keep a battery-powered radio or your phone nearby to stay updated on the storm's progress.

After the Storm

1. **Assess Damage:** Once it's safe, check for damage to your home and vehicles. Take photos for insurance purposes.
2. **Report to Insurance:** Contact your insurance company to report any damages and start the claims process.
3. **Clean Up Debris:** Clear away any fallen branches or debris, being cautious of any broken glass or sharp objects.
4. **Stay Cautious:** Be aware of potential hazards, such as downed power lines or sharp debris.

By taking these precautions, you can minimize the impact of a hailstorm on your buildings and belongings. Stay safe.