

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



Friday, 4 October 2024

## HELPING VICTORIANS PREPARE FOR THUNDERSTORM ASTHMA SEASON

The Allan Labor Government is encouraging Victorians to prepare for high-risk thunderstorm asthma days and take action to stay safe throughout this year's grass pollen season.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the State Control Centre to encourage Victorians to use the state's world-leading Epidemic Thunderstorm Asthma Risk Forecast System which is set to operate throughout the peak of the season from now until 31 December.

Providing a three-day forecast across Victoria's nine weather districts, the system will indicate a low (green), moderate (orange) or high (red) risk forecast – alerting those with asthma or hay fever when they should avoid exposure outdoors.

Those most at risk should ensure they take any prescribed medication as directed and develop or follow their asthma action plan or use asthma first aid if they experience symptoms.

On high-risk forecast days, people with asthma or hay fever can reduce their risk by avoiding the outdoors, particularly the wind gusts that can begin before storms.

These people should remain indoors to reduce the chance of exposure, close all windows and doors, and switch off any air conditioners that bring air in from outside.

The launch of the forecast system in 2017 followed the world's largest epidemic thunderstorm asthma event in Melbourne on 21 November 2016, that tragically resulted in 10 deaths and thousands of people developing breathing difficulties in a very short time.

Epidemic thunderstorm asthma occurs when many people develop asthma symptoms over a short time caused by high amounts of grass pollen and a certain type of thunderstorm.

The epidemic thunderstorm asthma risk forecast is available daily through the VicEmergency website and app – Victorians can set up a watch zone to receive advice and warnings for their area.

The forecast is also on [health.vic.gov.au](https://health.vic.gov.au) and [melbournepollen.com.au](https://melbournepollen.com.au) or the Melbourne Pollen app.

For more information on thunderstorm asthma, visit the [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/thunderstorm-asthma](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/thunderstorm-asthma).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

*"All Victorians who have even the mildest asthma or seasonal hay fever symptoms should download the VicEmergency app and set up a watch zone, so they are alerted on a high-risk day."*

*"We want everyone to be protected during thunderstorm asthma events this pollen season – our forecast system provides Victorians with all the most up to date information they need to stay healthy and safe."*

### Quote attributable to Acting Chief Health Officer Dr Evelyn Wong

*"Our epidemic thunderstorm asthma forecasting system means Victorians have the information they need to stay safe this grass pollen season."*

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