

Tornado Safety



Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms and can leave an area devastated in seconds. A tornado appears as a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud, striking the ground with whirling winds of up to 300 miles per hour or more. A tornado spins like a top and may sound like an airplane or train. Although tornadoes normally travel for up to 10 miles before they subside, 200-mile "tornado tracks" have been reported. Tornadoes can strike at any time of the year and often accompany hurricanes. They occur most frequently during April, May and June.

What to do before a tornado strikes

1. Know the terms used to describe tornado threats:
 - A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes, in and around the watch area. Stay tuned to radio and television reports in your area. Keep watch on the sky.
 - A tornado warning means tornadoes have been sighted or indicated by radar. You should take shelter immediately.
2. If you see any revolving, funnel-shaped clouds, report them immediately to 911.
3. Know the locations of designated shelter areas in public facilities, such as schools, public buildings and shopping centers.
4. Have emergency supplies on hand during tornado season.
5. Be sure everyone in your household knows in advance where to go and what to do in case of a tornado warning.
6. If you live in a single-family house, go to the basement, storm cellar an interior room or closet and take shelter, on the lower level of your house.
7. Make an inventory of your household furnishings and other possessions. Supplement the written inventory with photographs and/ or video tape. Keep inventories and photos in a safe deposit box or some other safe place away from the premises.

What to do during a tornado

1. Whenever severe thunderstorms threaten your area, listen to radio and television newscasts for the latest information and instructions.
2. When a tornado has been sighted, stay away from windows doors and outside walls. Protect your head from falling objects or flying debris. Take cover immediately, wherever you are:
 - In a house or small building, go to the basement or storm cellar. If there is no basement, go to an interior part of the structure on the lower level (closets, interior hallways). In either case, get under something sturdy (such as a heavy table) and stay there until the danger has passed.
 - In a school, nursing home, hospital, factory or shopping center, go to pre-designated shelter areas. Interior hallways on the lowest floor are usually safest. Stay away from windows and open spaces. Cooperate with the staff and authorities - they have had training about how to deal with emergencies.
 - In a high-rise building, go to small, interior rooms or hallways on the lowest floor possible.
 - In a vehicle, trailer or mobile home, get out immediately and go to a more substantial structure.
 - If there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine or culvert with your hands shielding your head.
3. Do not attempt to flee from a tornado in a car or vehicle. They are no match for the swift, erratic movement of these storms.

What to do after a tornado

1. Use great caution when entering a building damaged from high winds. When entering or cleaning a tornado-damaged building, be sure that walls, ceiling and roof are in place and that the structure rests firmly on the foundation.
2. Look for broken gas and downed power lines, or natural gas leaks.

Check for injuries. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help immediately.