

Tornado Safety Tips

Tornado Watch: Tornadoes are possible. Watch the sky and listen to the radio or television for more information. Be prepared to take shelter. If you see any rotating, funnel-shaped clouds, report them immediately by telephone to your local law enforcement agency. If you live in a mobile home, this is the time to move to a more substantial structure.

Tornado Warning: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter. Turn on a battery-operated radio or television and wait for the “all clear” announcement by authorities.

Before a Tornado:

- Determine the best location in your home and/or office to seek shelter when threatened by a tornado. A basement or cellar usually will afford the best protection. If an underground shelter is not available, identify an interior room or hallway on the lowest level.
- Conduct periodic tornado safety drills with your family.
- Learn how to shut off the utilities to your home.
- Decide how and where your family will reunite.
- If you live in a mobile home, identify a safe shelter outside of your mobile home such as a community park shelter, a neighbor or friend’s house, or a nearby public building.
- In a mobile home, consider installation of an underground shelter that is large enough to accommodate you, your family or several other nearby mobile home residents.
- Consider retrofitting your house with special fasteners, connectors and reinforcing bands to strengthen the structural integrity. Also, consider installing a reinforced concrete and steel “safe room” as a small room within your house.

During a Tornado at Home:

- Go at once to your predetermined shelter. In a basement, go under the stairs, under a heavy piece of furniture or under a workbench. Stay there until the danger has passed.
- If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a small inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet.
- Stay away from windows, doors and outside walls.
- Go to the center of the room. Outside windows and walls may be penetrated by high-speed, wind-borne missiles.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture, such as a workbench or heavy table, and hold onto it.
- Use pillows, mattresses or cushions to protect your head and neck.
- If in a mobile home, get out and seek shelter elsewhere. A mobile home can overturn very easily if precautions have not been taken to tie down the unit. If there isn’t a substantial shelter nearby, seek shelter in a low-lying area. Shield your head with your hands.

During a Tornado in a School, Nursing Home, Hospital, Shopping Center or at Work:

- Go to the designated storm shelter or basement, or to an inside hallway on the lowest level.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs, such as auditoriums, cafeterias, gymnasiums and large hallways. Stay away from windows and open spaces.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture, such as a workbench, or a heavy table or desk, and hold onto it. If sturdy furniture is not available, make yourself the smallest target possible. Squat low to the ground. Put your head down and cover your head and neck with your hands.
- If in a high-rise building, go to small, interior rooms or hallways on the lowest level possible and seek protection as detailed above. Stay away from windows and outside walls.

During a Tornado while Outdoors:

- If possible, get inside a substantial building.
- If shelter is not available or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch, culvert or low-lying area, or crouch near a strong building. Use your arms to protect your head and neck. Stay aware of the potential for flash floods.

During a Tornado in a Vehicle:

- Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle. Heavy rain, hail and traffic may impede your movement. Tornadoes can change directions quickly and can easily lift a vehicle and toss it through the air.
- Get out of the vehicle immediately and try to take shelter in a nearby building. Do NOT park under a bridge or underpass.
- If there is not time to get indoors, get out of the vehicle and lie in a ditch, culvert or low-lying area away from the vehicle.

After a Tornado:

- Monitor the radio or television for emergency information or instructions.
- Check for injured victims. Render first aid if necessary.
- Check on neighbors or relatives who may need special assistance.
- Do not attempt to move severely injured victims unless absolutely necessary. Wait for emergency medical assistance to arrive.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Exit damaged buildings. Re-enter only if absolutely necessary, and use extreme caution.
- Take photos or videotape the damage to your home or property.
- If driving, be alert for hazards on the roadway.
- If unaffected by the tornado, stay out of the damaged area until you are allowed to enter by officials. Your presence may hamper emergency operations.