

Tornado Safety Tips

Look & Listen for

...large hail, heavy rain, strong winds, frequent intense lightning ...bulge with a rotary motion at the base of the thunderstorm cloud ...loud roar like the sound of a jet or train.

Seek Safe Shelter

A basement is best. Otherwise choose ground-floor center rooms surrounded by other rooms. **Never choose upstairs locations** because tornadic wind speeds increase with height above the ground.

Choose rooms on the north and east sides of your shelter if no interior rooms are available. Stay near the innermost walls. Avoid rooms on the south and west, because tornados usually travel from southwest to northeast.

Choose a small closet or bathroom, because small rooms are less susceptible to collapse. Take shelter within the bathtub *if there are no glass tub enclosures or large mirrors nearby.*

How to Protect Yourself and Your Family

Stay calm.

Seek shelter IMMEDIATELY!

Keep a portable TV/radio and flashlight in your shelter.

Wear shoes to protect your feet from broken glass and other debris left by the storm.

Protect head and chest- crouch, face to floor, hands behind head.

Cover yourself with blankets, pillows or coats.

Hide under sturdy furniture.

Avoid candles, gas lanterns and oil lamps.

In schools and offices: seek designated shelter in interior rooms or hallway's on ground floor, or lowest floor possible. *Avoid auditoriums and gymnasiums.*

In shopping malls, seek the smaller interior shops on the ground floor.

In shopping centers, avoid large open rooms as well as the south and west walls.

Evacuate mobile homes and vehicles! Seek shelter in substantial structure, ditch or culvert.

Staying Safe in a Tornado

Ohio averages 16 tornadoes per year. Are you prepared?

Staying safe in a tornado's path:

As the skies darkened and the winds began to gather speed, the people of Xenia, Ohio had no idea that just minutes later, their town would be devastated by one of the worst tornadoes in Ohio history. That was 1974. And 25 years later, the people of the small Ohio town remember vividly the act of Mother Nature that took 32 lives.

Since then, towns throughout the U.S. have been hit by deadly tornadoes.

What is a tornado?

A tornado is the most violent atmospheric storm. A tornado is defined as a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. The most violent tornadoes are capable of tremendous destruction with wind speeds of 250 mph or more. Damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long. Once a tornado in Broken Bow, Oklahoma, carried a motel sign 30 miles and dropped it in Arkansas.

According to the National Weather Service, although tornadoes occur in many parts of the world, these destructive forces of nature are found most frequently in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains during the spring and summer months.

In an average year, 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide, resulting in 80 deaths and more than 1,500 injuries.

Safe places you can go:

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, basements and interior rooms are the safest places to be during a tornado.

A good rule of thumb is to put as many walls and floors as possible between you and the tornado. Once you find a safe place, take shelter underneath a sturdy bench, table, or the stairwell. Crouch down and place your head between your knees, using your arms to cover your head.

On the other hand, the least safe place to be is in a car. If you are in a car, abandon it immediately and find a ditch to lie in. Most tornado deaths occur in cars. And never try to outrun a tornado; it may be moving faster than you think!

If you do find yourself in a tornado's path, go to the basement. If there is no basement, go to an interior room on the lowest floor, such as a bathroom or closet. If possible, cover yourself with a blanket or mattress to protect yourself from flying debris.

Remember to stay away from exterior walls or glass-enclosed places and windows.

A warning versus a watch:

A tornado watch is issued when conditions are favorable for producing a tornado. When a tornado watch is issued, keep an eye on the weather and go over the tornado safety plan with your family. If weather conditions worsen, seek shelter.

A tornado warning is issued when a tornado has been spotted. In the case of a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately.

Tornado danger signs:

When a tornado is approaching, a dark, often greenish sky, a wall cloud and large hail may appear.

A loud roar similar to that of a freight train may be heard. An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible.

Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still. This is the calm before the storm.

Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm and it is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

Be prepared before the storm hits:

By the time a tornado is heading toward you, it is usually too late to make a plan. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, you should:

- Conduct tornado drills each tornado season.
- Designate an area in the home as a shelter, and practice having everyone in the family go there in response to a tornado threat.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person. This will help should the family be separated during the storm.

Preparing a tornado safety kit:

The American Red Cross suggests that you assemble a "disaster supplies kit" that you keep in your shelter area. The kit should contain:

1. A first aid kit with essential medication in addition to the usual items
2. A battery powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries
3. Canned and other non-perishable foods and a hand-operated can opener
4. Bottled water
5. Candles and matches
6. Sturdy shoes and work gloves
7. Cash and credit cards
8. Written instructions on how to turn off your homes utilities

After a tornado:

1. Help injured or trapped people.
2. Give first aid when appropriate.

3. Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
4. Call for help.
5. Turn on a radio or television to get the latest emergency information.
6. Stay out of damaged buildings.
7. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
8. Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
9. Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the building if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
10. Take pictures of the damage, both to the house and its contents, for insurance purposes.
11. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance--infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.