

FEMA Fact Sheet: Funnel Facts

Tornadoes are frightening realities. We can't prevent them or even predict where or when they will strike. Many of us aren't sure what we should do during a tornado. Some people aren't even clear about the difference between a tornado "watch" and a tornado "warning".

But there are some precautions we can take to minimize danger - to people and property.

When tornado season approaches, the watchwords are: Be informed and be prepared.

Knowing the difference between a watch and a warning is a good first step:

Tornado Watch

A tornado watch simply means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop. In this case you should take precautions to protect you and your property, and listen to the radio to keep informed.

Tornadoes are most likely to occur in the late afternoon on a hot spring day. However, tornadoes have occurred in every month at all times of the day or night. When a tornado watch is issued, be alert for changes in the weather. And be prepared to act quickly.

Tornado Warning

A tornado warning means that a tornado has actually been sighted. If one is issued for your area, you should seek shelter immediately! There is little time for closing windows or hunting for flashlights. It's a good idea to know where things are, and to have an emergency storm kit already prepared.

Before the Storm Hits

- A little planning can prevent unnecessary panic and confusion if a tornado does strike.
- Learn the warning signals used in your community. If a siren sounds, that means stay inside and take cover.
- Consider setting up a neighborhood information program through a club, church group or community group. Hold briefings on safety procedures as tornado season approaches. Set up a system to make sure senior citizens and shut-ins are alerted if there is a tornado warning.
- Put together an emergency storm kit including candles, matches, transistor radio, flashlight, batteries and simple first aid items in a waterproof container.
- Make a complete inventory of your possessions for insurance purposes. Keep that list in a bank safe deposit box or other safe place away from your home.

- Conduct drills with your family in the home; make sure each member knows the correct procedures if they are at work or school when a tornado hits.
- When a tornado WATCH is in effect you can take certain precautions to lessen danger.
- Move cars inside a garage or carport, if possible, to avoid damage from hail that often accompanies severe storms. Keep your car keys and house keys with you.
- Move lawn furniture and yard equipment such as lawnmowers inside if time permits. Otherwise they could become damaged or act as dangerous projectiles, causing serious injury or damage.
- Account for family members at home. Have your emergency kit ready.
- Keep your radio or TV tuned in to the weather reports.

When a tornado WARNING has been issued on the radio or by siren:

Seek shelter immediately!!!!

AT HOME: In the basement under something sturdy, like a bench. If there is no basement, a small room in the middle of the house (a closet or bathroom) is best. Always stay away from outside walls and windows.

AT WORK OR SCHOOL: Designated shelter areas are best. Stay away from large open rooms like auditoriums and gymnasiums, and rooms with windows. Lie low with hands covering the back of your head to reduce neck injury.

IN SHOPPING MALLS: Go to a designated shelter area or to the center of the building on a low level. Stay away from large, open rooms and windows. Never seek shelter in cars in the parking lot.

IN MOBILE HOMES OR CARS: Leave the vehicle. Seek a safe structure or lie down in a low area with your hands covering the back of your head and neck. Keep alert for flash floods that often accompany such storms.

After a Tornado

- **Keep calm. Stay in your shelter until after the storm is over.**
- **Check people around you for injuries. Begin first aid or seek help if necessary.**
Always cooperate with local officials
- **Check utility lines and appliances for damage. If you smell gas, open the windows and turn off the main valve. Don't turn on lights or appliances until the gas has dissipated. If electric wires are shorting out, turn off the power.**
- **When you go outside, watch out for downed power lines.**

- **Notify your insurance agent and provide as much detail as possible about damage to your property. Follow the agent's directions on filing your claim.**
- **Take steps to protect your home and furniture from further damage:**
 - **Clean and dry your furniture, bedding, rugs and carpeting as soon as possible.**
 - **Board up windows and holes in the walls or roof.**
- **Don't be rushed into signing repair contracts. Deal with reputable contractors. If you're unsure about a contractor's credentials perhaps your agent, claim adjustor, Better Business Bureau or Chamber of Commerce can help. Make sure the contractor you hire is experienced in repair work - not just new construction. Be sure of payment terms and consult your agent or adjustor before you sign any contracts.**
- **Keep receipts for living expenses beyond your normal ones (such as temporary quarters) and for temporary repair costs so you can seek insurance reimbursement.**

Tornado Myths

Separating fact from myth can mean the difference
between injury and safety in case of a tornado.
Below are four of the most common and dangerous “tornado myths”

MYTH: THE BEST PLACE TO BE DURING A TORNADO IS IN THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF A BUILDING.

FACT: The southwest corner is no safer than any other part of a building. The safest place to be is in a basement under something sturdy, like a workbench. If there is no basement, seek shelter in a small interior room in the middle of a building, like a closet or a bathroom.

Always stay away from outside walls and windows.

MYTH: WINDOWS SHOULD ALWAYS BE OPENED TO EQUALIZE PRESSURE.

FACT: Opening windows to equalize pressure during a tornado is ineffective in reducing damage. Don't worry about the windows; worry about protecting yourself. Also, flying glass is a real hazard.

MYTH: YOU CAN OUTRUN A TORNADO IN A CAR

FACT: Don't bet your life on it. A tornado is unpredictable; you can't know which way it's going to go or how fast. If you're in a car and a tornado is near, get away from the car and lie in a ditch or low area, protecting your head with your hands.

MYTH: MOBILE HOMES ARE SAFE IF THEY'RE TIED DOWN.

FACT: A mobile home is *never* safe in a violent windstorm such as a tornado. If you're in a mobile home when a tornado watch is announced, leave and go immediately to a safe structure. Or be prepared to take cover in a low area, covering your head and the back of your neck.

Remember: If you're in a ditch or ravine, be alert for flash floods that often accompany tornadoes.

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