

Fact Sheet

Tornadoes

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FEMA

A tornado is 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. In an average year, 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide. Every state is at some risk from this hazard.

Know Your Risk and What To Do

- Contact your local emergency management office to learn about emergency plans.
- Get additional information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (www.fema.gov), the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (www.noaa.gov).
- Inquire about emergency plans and procedures at your child's school and at your workplace.
- Make a family disaster plan that includes out-of-town contacts and locations to reunite if you become separated. Be sure everyone knows home, work and cell phone numbers, and how to call 9-1-1.
- Assemble a 3-day disaster supplies kit with food, water, medical supplies, battery-powered radio and NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, batteries, flashlights and other items.
- Gather important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial and insurance records. Store them in a fire and flood safe location or safe deposit box.

Before a Tornado

- Be alert to changing weather conditions.
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information.
- Remember that a **Tornado Watch** means tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, commercial radio, or television for information. A **Tornado Warning** means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.
- Look for approaching storms.
- Look for the following danger signs:
 - Dark, often greenish sky
 - Large hail
 - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
 - Loud roar, similar to a freight train
- If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.

During a Tornado

- If you are under a tornado WARNING, seek shelter immediately!
- If you are inside, go to the safe place you picked to protect yourself from glass and other flying objects. The tornado may be approaching your area.
- If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a dry ditch or low-lying area.
- If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for safety (as above).