

SAFETY & PREVENTION

Tornado Preparedness: Tips for Families

What is a Tornado?

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm (/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Lightning-and-Storm-Safety.aspx) down to the ground. The most violent tornadoes have winds of 250 miles per hour or more. They are capable of causing extreme destruction, including uprooting trees and well made structures, and turning normally harmless objects in deadly missiles.



Why talk about Tornadoes?

Tornadoes have been reported in every state, and are more likely to occur during spring and summer. Though they can happen any time of the day or night, they are most likely to occur between 3:00 and 9:00 p.m.

There are no areas immune to tornadoes; they have been reported in mountains and valleys, over deserts and swamps, from the Gulf Coast into Canada, in Hawaii and even Alaska.

Regardless of the location or time of year, if conditions are right, a tornado can happen.

What can I do to prepare for a Tornado?

In addition to completing the 4 Steps to Safety (/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/How-to-Prepare-for-Disasters.aspx), do the following:

- Listen to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, a portable battery-powered radio (or television), or a smart phone for updated emergency information of watches and warnings issued in your area.
- If planning a trip or extended period of time outdoors, listen to the latest forecasts, and take necessary action if threatening weather is possible.
- Discuss tornadoes with your family—everyone should know what to do in case all family members are not together. Discussing tornadoes ahead of time helps reduce fear and anxiety and lets everyone know how to respond.
- Get training – take a first aid class from your local Red Cross chapter.

Watch for tornado danger signs:

Dark, often greenish sky--a phenomenon caused by hail—may indicate a developing tornado. Other signs include wall cloud, an isolated lowering of the base of a thunderstorm; large hail; a cloud of debris; funnel cloud; and roaring noise.

What to do during a Tornado Watch:

A Tornado Watch means the conditions are right for tornadoes to develop, and people should remain aware and be prepared to take shelter. Listen continuously to a NOAA Weather Radio, or a portable battery-powered radio (or television) for updated emergency information. Everyone in a WATCH area should be ready to respond and act quickly. Be alert to changing weather conditions.

What to do during a Tornado Warning:

- A tornado warning means that a tornado has been seen in the area. People should take shelter immediately.
- Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio, a portable battery-powered radio (or television), or a smart phone for updated emergency information.

- If you are inside, go to your safe place to protect yourself from glass and other flying debris. Stay away from windows. Don't forget to grab your phones and take your pets to your safe spot
- If you're outside in a car or in a mobile home, go immediately to the basement of a nearby sturdy building. If there is no building nearby, lie flat in a low spot.
- Use your arms and hands to protect your head.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs, such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or shopping malls.

What to do after a Tornado:

- Continue listening to local radio or television stations or a NOAA Weather Radio for updated information and instructions.
- Protect yourself from further danger by putting on long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes, and work gloves.
- Help neighbors who may require special assistance.
- Avoid loose or dangling power lines and report them to the power company, police or fire department.
- Stay out of damaged buildings.
- Use the telephone for emergency calls only.

Additional Information:

- 5 Easy Ways to Prepare Your Pet for a Disaster (<http://www.community.fema.gov/connect.ti/readynpm/messageshowthread?threadid=52142>) (FEMA.gov)
- Getting Your Family Prepared for a Disaster (/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Getting-Your-Family-Prepared-for-a-Disaster.aspx)
- Helping Your Child Cope (/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Helping-Your-Child-Cope.aspx)
- Family Disaster Supplies List (/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Family-Disaster-Supplies-List.aspx)
- Lightning and Storm Safety (Audio) (/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Lightning-and-Storm-Safety.aspx)
- Ready Wrigley Prepares for Tornadoes (http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley/documents/14_246821_ready_wrigley_tornadoes_508.pdf) - An interactive activity book to designed to help children learn about and prepare for tornadoes. (CDC.gov)

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The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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