



Personal Risk Services

Tornado Preparedness

Tornados can strike- day or night- at any time of the year. If you live east of the Rocky Mountains, the threat of tornados is well known. While the steps to mitigating damage from a tornado are small due to the ferocity and suddenness of the events, you can minimize the risk of serious injury or worse with a few simple tips.

Preparing for severe storms and tornados

- Consider having your safe room reinforced. Plans for reinforcing an interior room to provide better protection can be found on the FEMA web site.
- Prepare for high winds by removing diseased and damaged limbs from trees.
- Move or secure lawn furniture, trash cans, hanging plants or anything else that can be picked up by the wind and become a projectile.
- Practice periodic tornado drills so that everyone knows what to do if a tornado is approaching.
- Know your community's warning system. Communities have different ways of warning residents about tornados, many having sirens intended for outdoor warning purposes.

Know the danger signs of severe storms and tornados

- During any storm, listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay informed about tornado watches and warnings.
- A wall cloud - an isolated lowering of the base of a thunderstorm cell, often times anvil in shape.
- Roaring noise and/or a visible funnel cloud with a debris cloud.
- A dark, greenish colored sky which is caused by large hail.
- **Do not wait until you see the tornado to seek shelter.**



Tornado Facts

- They may strike quickly, with little or no warning.
- They may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel.
- The average tornado moves Southwest to Northeast, but tornadoes have been known to move in any direction.
- The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 MPH, but may vary from stationary to 70 MPH.
- Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land.
- Waterspouts are tornadoes that form over water.
- Tornadoes are most frequently reported east of the Rocky Mountains during spring and summer months.
- Peak tornado season in the southern states is March through May; in the northern states, it is late spring through early summer.
- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 pm and 9 pm, but can occur at any time.

Source: FEMA

What to do during a severe storm or tornado (your choice of shelter should be driven by your circumstances)

- The safest place to be is an underground shelter, basement or safe room. If no underground shelter or safe room is available, a small, windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building is the safest alternative.
- Mobile homes are not safe during tornadoes or other severe winds.
 - If you have access to a sturdy shelter or a vehicle, abandon your mobile home immediately.
- If you are caught outdoors, seek shelter in a basement, shelter or sturdy building. If you cannot quickly walk to a shelter, immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter.
- If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. Now you have the following options as a last resort:
 - Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.
 - If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

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Sources: FEMA and American Red Cross

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