



When tornadoes strike, businesses can suffer. A large percentage of tornadoes occur between 3 and 6 p.m., when most people are at work. Be prepared to protect your employees, customers and property, and ensure business continuity.

## Before a Tornado

- **Monitor for severe thunderstorms in your area.**
  - NOAA's National Weather Service  
<http://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/wwa/>
- **Know the warning system for your community.**
  - Learn the thunderstorm warning system for your county or locality.
- **Know the terminology.**
  - A **tornado WATCH** is issued when weather conditions favor the formation of tornadoes, for example, during a severe thunderstorm -- be prepared to take shelter immediately if conditions worsen.
  - A **tornado WARNING** is issued when a tornado funnel is sighted or indicated by weather radar -- You should take shelter immediately!
- **Establish shelter locations on your property.**
  - The safest place is the interior part of a basement.
  - If there is no basement, use an inside room on the lowest floor (e.g., center hallway, closet).
  - Avoid windows, skylights, or glass doors, which could be broken by strong winds or hail.
  - There should be enough room for all employees, any customers or suppliers who may be at your business during the hazardous situation.
  - Stock the shelter with emergency supplies such as flashlights, battery powered radio, and a first aid kit.
- **Prepare and protect your employees**
  - Make sure everyone knows the location of storm shelter areas in the building; conduct annual emergency drills.
  - Encourage employees to develop an emergency preparedness plan for their family.
- **Make plans regarding customers.**
  - Determine the likelihood of customers being present if a severe storm situation.
  - Have an emergency plan for customers; review it with employees regularly.
  - Label shelter locations for the building.
- **Identify potential hazards on your property.**
  - Secure unstable materials that are outside your business (e.g., lumber, equipment, fuel tanks).
  - Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage.

- **Protect your assets.**
  - Maintain an inventory of all equipment used by your business.
  - Develop a schedule for backing up all computer records.
  - Keep backups of all tax, accounting, payroll and production records, customer and supplier data off-site.
  - Keep copies of all paper and computer files in an accessible but off-site location.
- **Prepare for business continuity.**
  - Have a business emergency plan.
  - Document all processes that keep your business running.
  - Determine what processes and equipment is needed to keep your business open.
  - Store extra supplies offsite and make a plan for temporary relocation.
- **Obtain tornado insurance.**
  - Business insurance policies can cover damage to your business property and equipment.
  - Add extra coverage in case of business interruption following the disaster.
  - Extra expense coverage may pay for the costs of relocating or leasing equipment while repairs are underway.

## During a Tornado

- **Stay informed.**
  - Listen to the radio or television about the situation.
- **If a WARNING is issued – Seek shelter immediately.**
- **Ensure employee and customer safety.**
  - Have personnel and customers go to the businesses' emergency shelter location immediately!
    - Interior hallway areas
    - Avoid glass walls and windows
    - Avoid areas with wide-span roofs (e.g., warehouses)
  - Designate an employee to be the contact for employees and customers and to ensure they go to shelter locations.
  - Instruct individuals to sit facing the wall with their heads between their knees.
  - Keep exterior doors and windows closed and interior doors (offices to corridors) open to minimize pressures.
  - Do not use elevators for shelter; if the building loses power, you may become trapped.
  - If there is time, turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve.

---

## After a Tornado

---

- **Return to your business only after officials have declared the area safe.**
- **Assess employees and customers for injuries.**
  - If someone has been injured, call 911 or your local Emergency Medical Services.
- **Implement your business post-disaster communication strategy to contact employees, customers and vendors.**
- **Assess your property.**
  - Survey the inside and outside of the building for structural damage, sharp objects, downed power lines, damaged gas lines, or other hazards (e.g. chemicals).
  - If re-entering a building, use extreme caution, as moving through debris presents further hazards.
  - Check machinery and equipment for damage.
  - Take photographs of all damage for insurance or emergency assistance purposes.
  - Contact your insurance agent to report any losses and obtain advice about restoration needs.
- **Clean up safely.**
  - During cleanup, personnel should wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves to protect their body from injury.
  - Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.
  - A tetanus booster may be warranted.
  - Be aware of hazards that may cause injury while cleaning up (e.g., chain saws, electrical or chemical hazards).
  - Report any hazardous materials (e.g., fuel, chemicals) that have leaked, to emergency response personnel.
  - Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated.

---

*Development of this educational material was by the Center for Food Security and Public Health with funding from the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture MOU-2010-HSEMD-004. June 2010.*

