



Tornadoes are unpredictable and can cause major damage and destruction in seconds. The extremely high winds, flying debris as well as the wreckage left behind can cause personal injury or possibly death. Although nothing can be done to prevent tornadoes, there are actions you can take to protect yourself and your family from the impact of a tornado.

## Before a Tornado

- **Know the warning signals.**
  - Learn about the tornado warning system for your county or locality.
  - Know how to distinguish the siren's warning for a tornado watch and a tornado warning.
- **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!
- **Monitor for tornadoes in your area.**
  - NOAA's National Weather Service  
<http://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/wwa/>
- **Identify an emergency shelter location in your home.**
  - The safest place is the interior part of a basement or storm cellar.
  - If there is no basement, use an inside room on the lowest floor (e.g., center hallway, bathroom, closet).
  - Avoid windows, skylights, or glass doors, which could be broken by strong winds or hail and cause damage or injury.
- **Have a family emergency plan. Discuss with your family:**
  - The best place to seek shelter from a tornado – in your home and other locations (e.g., outdoors, school, work, car).
  - How to protect themselves from flying/falling debris.
  - Possible disruption of services for extended periods of time (e.g., electric, phone and local food and water sources).
- **Prepare an emergency kit.**
  - This should include: 3-5 day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and non-perishable food; don't forget a can opener for canned goods • One change of clothing and sturdy footwear per person • One blanket or sleeping bag per person • A first-aid kit, including prescription medicines • Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio • Flashlight and plenty of extra batteries • A credit card or cash • Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members

## During a Tornado

- **Stay informed.**
  - Listen to the radio or television about the situation.
- **Gather your emergency supplies.**
- **If a WARNING is issued – Seek shelter immediately.**
- **At home.**
  - Go to your emergency shelter location – the interior part of a basement or inner room on the lowest floor.
  - For added protection, get under something sturdy, such as a heavy table or workbench.
  - If possible, cover your body with a blanket, sleeping bag, or mattress, and protect your head with anything available --even your hands.
  - Avoid taking shelter where there are heavy objects, such as pianos or refrigerators, on the area of floor directly above you; they could fall through the floor if the tornado strikes your house.
- **Mobile homes.**
  - **DO NOT STAY IN A MOBILE HOME DURING A TORNADO!**
  - Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection - go to a nearby building, preferably one with a basement.
  - If there is no nearby shelter, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert and shield your head with your hands.
- **On the road.**
  - **DO NOT TRY TO OUTFRAN A TORNADO IN YOUR CAR!**
  - The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle; cars, buses, and trucks are easily tossed by tornado winds.
  - If you see a tornado, stop your vehicle and get out - lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert and shield your head with your hands.
  - Do not get under your vehicle.
  - Do not get under an overpass or bridge; you are safer in a low, flat location.
- **Outdoors.**
  - If you are caught outside during a tornado and there is no adequate shelter immediately available:
    - Lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert and shield your head with your hands.
    - Avoid areas with many trees.
    - Do not get under any vehicle, no matter what its size.

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## After a Tornado

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- **Stay safe.**
  - Stay away from tornado damaged areas.
  - Tornadoes often damage power lines, gas lines or electrical systems, so there is a risk of fire, electrocution or explosion.
- **Cleanup safely.**
  - Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves, and gloves to avoid injury.
  - Stay away from downed power lines and report them immediately.
  - Be aware of hazards that may cause injury to you or others cleaning up (e.g., chain saws, chemicals, exposed nails, broken glass).
  - Use caution with gas powered equipment – dangerous carbon monoxide can be generated; use in well ventilated areas.
  - Seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning – feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseated.
- **Seek medical attention for injuries as soon as possible.**
  - Injury may result from the direct impact of a tornado or it may occur afterward when people walk among debris and enter damaged buildings.
- **Protect your mental health.**
  - Effects may be immediate or delayed.
  - Maintain as much of a normal routine as possible.
  - Seek assistance if symptoms are prolonged (e.g., few weeks).

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