



Tornado Guide

Weather's most dangerous phenomenon

Updated: Sunday, 22 Mar 2009, 4:37 PM CDT
Published : Thursday, 19 Mar 2009, 11:07 AM CDT

Tornadoes are the most violent atmospheric phenomenon on the planet. Winds of 200 to 300 miles per hour can occur with the most violent tornadoes. Notification of impending tornadic activity is issued in the form of a tornado watch or warning.

These destructive forces of nature are found most frequently in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains during the spring and summer months. In an average year, 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide, resulting in 80 deaths and over 1,500 injuries. A tornado is defined as 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. A tornado in Tarrant County in 2000 picked up papers from a building in Fort Worth and dropped them near Arlington.

SUPPLIES:

[Your disaster kit](#)

[Your evacuation kit](#)

What to do to prepare for a tornado

- Develop a plan for you and your family for home, work, school and when outdoors.
- Have frequent drills.
- Know the county/parish in which you live, and keep a highway map nearby to follow storm movement from weather bulletins.
- Have a NOAA Weather Radio with a warning alarm tone and battery back-up to receive warnings.
- Listen to radio and television for information.
- If planning a trip outdoors, listen to the latest forecasts and take necessary action if threatening weather is possible.

Environmental Cues - What to watch for:

- Dark, often greenish sky
- Wall cloud
- Large hail
- Loud roar; similar to a freight train

If a tornado approaches:

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.
- Bring a battery-operated radio with you to your shelter
- Stay away from windows, doors and outside walls.
- Get out of automobiles.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car; instead, leave it immediately.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes and should be abandoned.
- Do not open windows (this does not protect buildings from tornado damage).
- Find an interior room on the lowest floor, if there is no basement.
- Cover yourself in blankets, towels or anything that will protect you from flying debris.
- If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately. Most deaths during tornadoes occur in cars and mobile homes.
- If no suitable structure is nearby, lie flat, face down, in the nearest ditch or depression and use your hands to cover your head to protect against flying debris