

# TORNADOES

PREPARING | SURVIVING | RECOVERING



EMERGENCY READY

ER™ Preparedness Guides

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Forget The Wizard of Oz notion that "twisters" only happen in Kansas. Tornadoes have been reported in every state. While they typically occur during spring and summer, tornadic storms can develop throughout the year. With winds swirling at 200 miles per hour or more, a tornado can destroy just about anything in its path. When a Tornado Warning is issued, you may only have seconds to take shelter. The more you and your family are prepared, the better chances you have of surviving a devastating storm.





# PREPARING

## LEARN ABOUT TORNADOES

The more you understand about these powerful forces of nature, the better you can prepare for them.

## HOW DOES A TORNADO FORM?

Tornadoes are born out of supercell thunderstorms, a product of unstable atmospheric conditions. As winds of varying altitudes and speeds move in different directions, rising air starts to rotate. Not all supercells produce tornadoes. Tornadoes form as gusts of warmer air closer to the ground rise, causing cooler air to sink, creating a vortex of water vapor and a spiraling funnel cloud. The updraft of warm air coupled with the pressure of the downdraft of cold air forces the funnel cloud to touch the ground resulting in a tornado.

## TORNADO SEASON

Although tornadoes can form throughout the year, the majority of tornadic storms occur between March and May.

## KNOW YOUR AREA'S RISK

Traditionally, tornado alley extends from central Texas to northern Iowa and stretches from central Kansas to western Ohio. Recently, meteorologists have adjusted tornado alley to include the southern states of Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia.



## KNOW THE TERMS

**Tornado WATCH: Stay Vigilant.** Current or upcoming weather conditions may produce a tornado.

**Tornado WARNING: Take Action!** A tornado has been sighted and may be headed for your area. Take shelter immediately.

Tornado WATCHES and WARNINGS are issued by the county or parish.

## ACCESS THE NOAA WEATHER ALERT SYSTEM

Download the NOAA Weather Radar Alert System app on your Smart Phone or purchase a radio that can broadcast the NOAA Weather Alert stations.

## IDENTIFY A TORNADO SHELTER

Designate a place in your home or office as the tornado shelter. Ideally this place would be located underground; basements or storm cellars provide the most protection during a tornado. IF your house does not have an underground shelter, choose an interior room located on the lowest level of the building and away from large windows. Stay away from windows or exterior walls.

## CONDUCT TORNADO DRILLS

Practice navigating to the designated tornado shelter until everyone in the household knows exactly where to go and what to do. Fill out the "Home Tornado Plan" included with this guide and distribute to family members.



## BUILD A KIT

Store your survival kit in your tornado shelter or designated safe spot. Your kit should include the following items:

**Food and Water:** a 7-day supply of fresh water and non-perishable food for each person in your family. Include food and water for your pets.

**Shelter Supplies:** thermal mylar blankets, sleeping bags, portable tents, tarps, and plastic sheeting

**Hygiene Items:** waterless shampoo and toothpaste, comb, toilet paper, tissue paper, wipes, portable toilet, disposable bags

**First Aid:** family-sized first aid kit and extra prescription medications

**PPE:** masks for each family member, sanitation wipes, hand sanitizer

**Lighting:** hand-crank/solar-powered flashlights, extra batteries, candles

**Communication Device:** Hand-crank/solar-powered radio with access to the NOAA weather-band emergency alert channels. Do not rely on your cell phone for news and evacuation bulletins.

**Tools:** shovels and pry bars for performing search and rescue operations, gas/water shut-off wrench

**Clothing:** a pair of closed-toe shoes, and extra clothing for each family member



Practice this plan with all family members

Plan and get ready: Pick a safe spot in your home where family members can gather during a tornado. If you have a basement, designate it as your safe spot. Make sure there are no windows or glass doors in the area. Keep this place uncluttered, and easily accessible. Store your survival kit in this safe area. If you live in a mobile home, choose another safety spot in a sturdy, nearby building.

Basement:  Yes  No

If yes, the basement is your safe spot. If no (or if you're in a high-rise building), choose another safety spot.

Location of safety spot: \_\_\_\_\_

Assemble a tornado Safety Kit in a clearly labeled, easy-to-grab box, bag, or bucket.

Location of Tornado Safety Kit: \_\_\_\_\_

Write instructions on how and when to turn off your utilities - electricity, gas, and water.

Gas: \_\_\_\_\_

Water: \_\_\_\_\_

Electricity: \_\_\_\_\_

Make sure all family members know the name of the county or parish where you live. If you travel, take note of the county where you are staying.

Name of county/parish where you live:

\_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# SURVIVING

## WHEN A TORNADO WATCH IS ISSUED

Be alert to changing weather conditions and listen to local radio and TV stations or the NOAA Weather Alert System for further updates.

## WHEN A TORNADO WARNING IS ISSUED

- If you are inside, immediately go to your tornado shelter.
- If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area covering your head with your hands.
- After taking shelter, crouch under a heavy piece of furniture while protecting your head with your hands.
- If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for a sturdy building or lay flat in a ditch protecting your head with your hands.
- Do not try to outrun the tornado with your vehicle.
- Do not take shelter in an overpass! Overpasses create a wind tunnel effect increasing wind speeds and propelling debris under the overpass.





# RECOVERING

## CHECK FOR INJURIES AND DAMAGE

- Be aware of falling debris, broken glass and downed power lines (put on your closed-toe shoes).
- Do not light a match in the event there is a gas leak in your house or shelter - If you smell gas, evacuate the building.
- Treat superficial injuries with your first aid kit - Do not move seriously injured people.

## COMMUNICATE

- Use your cell phone only to call for emergency help. Text loved ones leaving the phone lines free for emergency calls.
- Listen to the radio for emergency updates and safety advisories.

## RECOVER

- When the danger has passed and injuries are treated, contact your insurance company to begin the claims process.
- Take photos of damage and do not throw anything away until it has been documented.

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