



## 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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