



Tornado Safety Tips

Approximately 1,200 tornadoes hit the U.S. each year, causing an average of \$24,000 in home damage and \$4,000 in auto damage. Other than a direct hit, the majority of tornado damage to homes and cars occurs from falling tree debris or fallen trees. A tornado is perhaps one of the most terrifying forces of destruction nature can unleash, with a funnel of winds swirling at up to 300 mph. They can happen any time of year, and appear transparent until they pick up dust and debris. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, one tornado can cut a path of devastation a mile wide and 50 miles long. So it's important to know how to prepare for a tornado and what to do during and after a tornado. These tornado safety tips can help protect your family and home.

TORNADO WARNING SIGNS

Thankfully, tornadoes don't come completely without warning. Pay attention to these signs that often indicate when a tornado may be brewing:

- A dark sky, often greenish
- A large, low-lying cloud – very dark, possibly rotating
- Large hailstones falling
- A loud roar, like a freight train

PREPARE YOUR HOME & FAMILY

No house can withstand a direct hit from a severe tornado, but “hardening” your home can help it survive if it's on the fringe of the tornado's path. Also vital: proper tornado preparation with your family so they know exactly what to do in case of a tornado:

- Designate an emergency meeting spot and decide who takes charge of the dog and/or cat.
- Show adult and teen family members where electrical, gas and water shut-offs are located and how to turn them off. Make sure the proper tools are nearby.
- Have a well-stocked first aid kit, flashlights, and plenty of batteries.
- Install impact-resistant windows.
- Make certain your doors have at least three hinges and a deadbolt lock with a bolt at least 1 inch long.
- Install permanent wood or metal stiffeners on your garage door. Or contact the door manufacturer about temporary supports you can easily attach and remove.
- Make sure your roof covering and sheathing beneath it can resist high winds.
- Consider replacing gravel and rock landscaping with mulch or shredded bark, which can be less deadly in high winds.
- Trim trees and shrubbery. Pay particular attention to weak or dead branches that could fall on your home.

BEFORE A TORNADO HITS

If conditions are right for a tornado in your area:

- Stay tuned to local radio and TV for any tornado announcements and instructions.
- Speaking of which, a portable battery-operated or hand-crank radio is a good investment.
- Turn off all utilities.
- If it's safe, move outdoor furniture and grills inside. They can be deadly flying debris.
- If emergency officials haven't directed you to a public shelter, get your family to the basement, a closet, a small room, or a hallway away from windows. The more walls between you and the outside, the better.
- Lean a mattress against the wall of the room you're in.
- Don't open your windows. Keep the wind and rain outside.
- Hand out flashlights. The tornado will probably disrupt electrical service.
- If you're in a mobile home, find shelter elsewhere.
- If you're in a vehicle, get out and head for a sturdy building. If one is not near, a ditch can provide shelter.
- Don't take shelter under a bridge or overpass – these structures could be destroyed.

AFTER A TORNADO HAS COME THROUGH

If you and your family were forced to leave your home – or if it has been severely damaged from the tornado – wait for authorities to give the all-clear to re-enter. Then:

- Check for structural damage before going inside.
- If dark, use a flashlight – not matches, a candle or a lighter. An open flame could ignite leaking gas.
- Listen for reports to see when drinking water is safe.
- Don't turn your power on until an electrician has inspected your system.
- Use your cell phone or camera to take pictures of the damage that can be used to document your insurance claim and then contact your insurance company or agent.



A tornado **WATCH** means a tornado is possible.

A tornado **WARNING** means a tornado is already occurring or will occur soon. **SEEK SHELTER IMMEDIATELY**