



Tornados

From the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Signs of an Approaching Storm

Some tornados strike rapidly, without time for a tornado warning, and sometimes without a thunderstorm in the vicinity. When you are watching for rapidly emerging tornados, it is important to know that you cannot depend on seeing a funnel: clouds or rain may block your view. The following weather signs may mean that a tornado is approaching:

- A dark or green-colored sky.
- A large, dark, low-lying cloud.
- Large hail.
- A loud roar that sounds like a freight train.

If you notice any of these weather conditions, take cover immediately, and keep tuned to local radio and TV stations or to a NOAA weather radio.

NOAA Weather Radios

NOAA weather radios are the best way to receive warnings from the National Weather Service. By using a NOAA weather radio, you can receive continuous updates on all the weather conditions in your area. The range of these radios depends on where you live, but the average range is 40 miles. The radios are sold in many stores. The National Weather Service recommends buying a radio with a battery backup (in case the power goes off) and a tone-alert feature that automatically sounds when a weather watch or warning is issued

Sighting a Funnel Cloud

If you see a funnel cloud nearby, take shelter immediately (see the following section for instructions on shelter). However, if you spot a tornado that is far away, help alert others to the hazard by reporting it to the newsroom of a local radio or TV station before taking shelter as described later. Use common sense and exercise caution: if you believe that you might be in danger, seek shelter immediately.

Taking Shelter

Your family could be anywhere when a tornado strikes--at home, at work, at school, or in the car. Discuss with your family where the best tornado shelters are and how family members can protect themselves from flying and falling debris. The key to surviving a tornado and reducing the risk of injury lies in planning, preparing, and practicing what you and your family will do if a tornado strikes. Flying debris causes most deaths and injuries during a tornado. Although there is no *completely* safe place during a tornado, some locations are much safer than others.

At Home

Pick a place in the home where family members can gather if a tornado is headed your way. One basic rule is *AVOID WINDOWS*. An exploding window can injure or kill. The safest place in the home is the interior part of a basement. If there is no basement, go to an inside room, without windows, on the lowest floor. This could be a center hallway, bathroom, or closet. 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 that is directly above you. They could fall through the floor if the tornado strikes your house.

In a Mobile Home

DO NOT STAY IN A MOBILE HOME DURING A TORNADO. Mobile homes can turn over during strong winds. Even mobile homes with a tie-down system cannot withstand the force of tornado winds. Plan ahead. If you live in a mobile home, go to a nearby building, preferably one with a basement. If there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert and shield your head with your hands. If you live in a tornado-prone area, encourage your mobile home community to build a tornado shelter.

On the Road

The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Cars, buses, and trucks are easily tossed by tornado winds. ***DO NOT TRY TO OUTFRAN A TORNADO IN YOUR CAR.*** If you see a tornado, stop your vehicle and get out. Do not get under your vehicle. Follow the directions for seeking shelter outdoors (see next section).

Outdoors

If you are caught outside during a tornado and there is no adequate shelter immediately available--

- Avoid areas with many trees.
- Avoid vehicles.
- Lie down flat in a gully, ditch, or low spot on the ground.
- Protect your head with an object or with your arms.

Office Buildings, Schools, Hospitals, Churches, and Other Public Buildings

Extra care is required in offices, schools, hospitals, or any building where a large group of people is concentrated in a small area. The exterior walls of such buildings often have large windows.

If you are in any of these buildings--

- Move away from windows and glass doorways.
- Go to the innermost part of the building on the lowest possible floor.
- Do not use elevators because the power may fail, leaving you trapped.
- Protect your head and make yourself as small a target as possible by crouching down.

Shelter for People with Special Needs

Advance planning is especially important if you require assistance to reach shelter from an approaching storm

- If you are in a wheelchair, get away from windows and go to an interior room of the house. If possible, seek shelter under a sturdy table or desk. Do cover your head with anything available, even your hands.
- If you are unable to move from a bed or a chair and assistance is not available, protect yourself from falling objects by covering up with blankets and pillows.
- If you are outside and a tornado is approaching, get into a ditch or gully. If possible, lie flat and cover your head with your arms.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

Your Community Partner in Public Health

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