

Tornado Safety

Most tornado damage is caused by violent winds. Many injuries and deaths result from flying debris. When a tornado threatens, your immediate action can save your life.

TORNADO SAFETY RULES

- **Tornado Watch**
Conditions are favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms with the potential of tornadoes.
- **Tornado Warning**
Tornado has been sighted or detected on radar. TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY.

Here's how you and your family can be prepared:

1. Locate the safest room in your home for your family to seek shelter during tornado warnings. Rule of thumb...put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. A small, windowless room or closet on the lowest level is recommended.
2. Purchase a NOAA Weather Alert Radio so that you can be alerted to severe weather warnings night or day.
3. When building a new home, consider adding a protected safe room that will withstand wind speeds up to 250 mph. Or, consider retrofitting your existing home with a protected safe room.
4. Keep enough food and water in your home to last your family for up to three days. Rule of thumb...store at least one gallon of water per person, per day, for a three- day period. And remember your pets. Also remember to replace your food and water every six months.
5. Have a battery operated radio and flashlights with extra batteries on hand at all times.
6. Teach your children how and when to call 9-1-1.
7. Pick two meeting places for your family. A spot right outside your home for an emergency, such as a fire, and a place away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
8. Learn disaster safety rules.
9. Practice your plan. Participate in the Statewide Tornado Drill Ask questions to make sure your family remembers meeting places, phone numbers, and safety rules. Test your smoke detectors monthly and change the batteries at least once a year. Test and recharge your fire extinguishers according to manufacturer's instructions.

Tornado Safety Tips:

Most tornado damage is caused by violent winds. Many injuries and deaths result from flying debris. When a tornado threatens, your immediate action can save your life.

STAY AWAY FROM WINDOWS, DOORS AND OUTSIDE WALLS. PROTECT YOUR HEAD

- In homes and small buildings, go to the basement or to an interior part on the lowest level - closets, bathrooms or interior halls. Get under something sturdy. Do not leave the building until the storm has passed.
- In schools, nursing homes, hospitals, factories, and shopping centers, go to pre-designated shelter areas. interior hallways on the lowest floor are usually best. Avoid auditoriums, gymnasiums, or other structures with wide, freestanding roofs.
- In high-rise buildings, go to interior small rooms or hallways.
- In vehicles or mobile homes, leave them and go to a substantial structure. if there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert with your hands shielding your head. In open country, lie flat in the nearest ditch or ravine with your hands shielding your head

Gordon County Emergency Management Agency has installed severe weather sirens across the county. These weather sirens are used to alert citizens about severe weather including tornados. These weather sirens are tested on the first Wednesday of each month.

All citizens are urged to purchase a NOAA Weather Alert Radio to assure that you will be alerted to any severe weather watches or warnings in time to take the appropriate actions. When a tornado is coming, you have only a short amount of time to make life-or-death decisions. Advance planning and quick response are the keys to surviving a tornado.

BEFORE A TORNADO:

- Conduct tornado drills each tornado season.
- Designate an area in the home as a shelter and practice having everyone in the family go there in response to a tornado threat. (A basement offers the best protection, but lacking that, choose a small room in the centermost part of your home on the lowest floor, such as a closet or bathroom.)
- Obtain plans from your local Emergency Management Agency on how to construct a "safe room" within an existing home or in a new home. These rooms will withstand 250 mph winds and cost between \$2,500 and \$6,000 depending on the type and size you choose. There are special plans for mobile home communities. Discuss with family members the difference between a "tornado watch" and a "tornado warning."

- **Have disaster supplies on hand:**
 - Flashlight and extra batteries
 - Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
 - First aid kit and manual
 - Emergency food and water
 - Non-electric can opener
 - Essential medicines
 - Cash and credit cards
 - Sturdy shoes
- **Develop an emergency communication plan:** In case family members are separated from one another during a tornado (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.
- **Tornado Watches and Warnings:** A tornado watch is issued by the National Weather Service when tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. This is time to remind family members where the safest places within your home are located and listen to the radio or television for further developments. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Mobile Homes are particularly vulnerable. A mobile home can overturn very easily even if precautions have been taken to tie down the unit. When a tornado warning is issued, take shelter in a building with a strong foundation. If shelter is not available, lie in ditch or low-lying area a safe distance away from the unit.
- **Learn these tornado danger signs:**
 - An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible.
 - Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still.
 - Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

DURING A TORNADO:

If at home:

- Go at once to a windowless, interior room; storm cellar; basement; or lowest level of the building.
- If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, e.g., a bathroom or closet.
- Get away from the windows.
- Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.
- If in a mobile home, get out and find shelter elsewhere.

If at work or school:

- Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest level.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or shopping malls.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If outdoors:

- If possible, get inside a building.
- If shelter is not available or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If in a car:

- Never try to out drive a tornado in a car or truck. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck and toss it through the air.
- Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.
- If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle. Be aware of the potential for flooding.

AFTER A TORNADO:

- Help injured or trapped persons.
- Give first aid when appropriate.
- Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
- Call for help.
- Turn on radio or television to get the latest emergency information.
- Stay out of damaged buildings. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the buildings if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take pictures of the damage--both to the house and its contents--for insurance purposes.
- Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance--infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

INSPECTING UTILITIES IN A DAMAGED HOME

Check for gas leaks--If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional. Look for electrical system damage--If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician first for advice.

Check for sewage and water lines damage--If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

Fujita - Pearson Tornado Scale

- **F-0:** 40-72 mph - chimney damage, tree branches broken
- **F-1:** 73-112 mph - mobile homes pushed off foundation or overturned
- **F-2:** 113-157 mph - considerable damage, mobile homes demolished, trees uprooted
- **F-3:** 158-205 mph - roofs and walls torn down, trains overturned, cars thrown
- **F-4:** 207-260 mph - well-constructed walls leveled
- **F-5:** 261-318 mph - homes lifted off foundation and carried considerable distances, autos thrown as far as 100 meters

For more information, you can visit www.weather.gov.