



# EMERGENCY FOCUS: TORNADO

A **tornado** is a violently rotating column of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm down to the ground. Tornadoes are capable of completely destroying well-made structures, uprooting trees, and hurling objects through the air like deadly missiles. Tornadoes can occur at any time of day or night and at any time of the year.



## Preparation is key to staying safe and minimizing impacts

- ▶ **Be Weather-Ready:** Check the forecast regularly to see if you are at risk for tornadoes. Listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay informed about tornado watches and warnings.
- ▶ **Sign Up for Notifications:** Know how your community sends warnings. There are outdoor warning sirens to alert residents who may be outdoors. Local media and smart phones alert residents of severe storms capable of producing tornadoes.
- ▶ **Create a Communications Plan:** Have a family plan that includes an emergency meeting place and related information. If you live in a mobile home or home without a basement, identify a nearby safe building you can get too quickly, such as a church or a family member's home.
- ▶ **Pick a safe room** in your home, such as a basement, storm cellar, or an interior room on the lowest floor with no windows. Check more ideas for your family plan at: <https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>.
- ▶ **Practice Your Plan:** Conduct a family tornado drill regularly so everyone knows what to do if a tornado is approaching. Make sure all members of your family know to go there when tornado warnings are issued. Don't forget pets if time allows.
- ▶ **Prepare Your Home:** Consider having your safe room reinforced. You can find plans for reinforcing an interior room to provide better protection on the Federal Emergency Management Agency website: [www.fema.gov/safe-room-resources](http://www.fema.gov/safe-room-resources).
- ▶ **Help Your Neighbor:** Encourage your loved ones to prepare for the possibility of tornadoes. Take CPR and first aid training so you can help if someone is hurt.



## When a tornado strikes, acting quickly is key to staying safe and minimizing impacts

- ▶ **Stay Weather-Ready:** Continue to listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay updated about tornado watches and warnings.
- ▶ **At Your House:** If you are in a tornado warning, go to your basement, safe room, or an interior room away from windows. Do not forget pets if time allows.
- ▶ **At Your Workplace or School:** Follow your tornado drill and proceed to your tornado shelter location quickly and calmly. Stay away from windows and do not go to large open rooms such as cafeterias, gymnasiums, or auditoriums.
- ▶ **Outside:** Seek shelter inside a sturdy building immediately if a tornado is approaching. Sheds and storage facilities are not safe. Neither is a mobile home or tent. If you have time, get to a safe building.
- ▶ **In a Vehicle:** Being in a vehicle during a tornado is not safe. The best course of action is to drive to the closest shelter. If you are unable to make it to a safe shelter, either get down in your car and cover your head, or abandon your car and seek shelter in a low lying area such as a ditch or ravine.



## What should you do after the tornado has impacted your area?

- ▶ **Stay Informed:** Continue to listen to local news or a NOAA Weather Radio to stay updated about tornado watches and warnings. Multiple rounds of thunderstorms capable of producing tornadoes are possible during severe weather outbreaks.
- ▶ **Contact Your Family and Loved Ones:** Let your family and close friends know that you're okay so they can help spread the word. Text messages or social media are more reliable forms of communication than phone calls.
- ▶ **Assess the Damage:** After the threat for tornadoes has ended, check to see if your property has been damaged. When walking through storm damage, wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and sturdy shoes. Contact 911 if you see power lines down. Stay out of damaged buildings. Be aware of insurance scammers if your property has been damaged.
- ▶ **Help Your Neighbor:** If you come across people that are injured and you are properly trained, provide first aid to victims if needed until emergency response teams arrive.

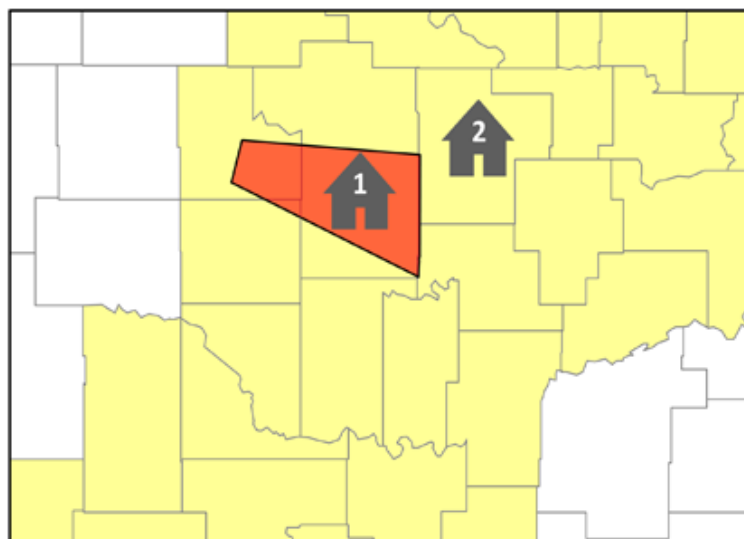
### What is the difference between a Tornado Watch and a Tornado Warning issued by the National Weather Service?

#### ▶ Tornado Watch: Be Prepared!

Tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. Review and discuss your emergency plans and check supplies and your safe room. Be ready to act quickly if a warning is issued or you suspect a tornado is approaching. Acting early helps to save lives! Watches are issued by the National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center for counties where tornadoes may occur. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

#### ▶ Tornado Warning: Take Action!

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. There is imminent danger to life and property. Move to an interior room on the lowest floor of a sturdy building. Avoid windows. If in a mobile home, a vehicle, or outdoors, move to the closest substantial shelter and protect yourself from flying debris. Warnings are issued the National Weather Service in the Quad Cities, which is our local National Weather Service office. Warnings typically encompass a much smaller area (around the size of a city or small county) that may be impacted by a tornado identified by a forecaster on radar or by a trained spotter or law enforcement who is watching the storm.



### Tornado Products



#### Tornado Warning

Tornado expected! Seek shelter.  
A tornado is occurring or will shortly at this location on the map.



#### Tornado Watch

Tornado possible. Be prepared.  
Weather conditions favor thunderstorms capable of producing tornadoes at this location on the map.

