



Tornadoes

Tornadoes can destroy buildings, flip cars, and create deadly flying debris. Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air that extend from a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes can:

- Happen anytime and anywhere;
- Bring intense winds, over 200 MPH; and
- Look like funnels.

IF YOU ARE UNDER A TORNADO WARNING, FIND SAFE SHELTER RIGHT AWAY

- If you can safely get to a sturdy building, then do so immediately.
- Go to a safe room, basement, or storm cellar.
- If you are in a building with no basement, then get to a small interior room on the lowest level.
- Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls.
- Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You're safer in a low, flat location.
- Watch out for flying debris that can cause injury or death.
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- If you cannot stay at home after a tornado, make plans to shelter with friends and family. If necessary, go to a public shelter. Shelters are taking precautions to protect people from COVID-19.
 - If you must go to a public shelter after a tornado, try to bring items that can help protect you and others in the shelter from COVID-19, such as [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, cleaning materials, and two masks per person. Note that your regular public shelter may not be open this year. Check with local authorities for the latest information about public shelters.
 - While you are at the shelter, [take actions that will protect you and others from COVID-19](#). Wear a mask and maintain a distance of at least six feet between yourself and people who are not part of your household while at a public shelter. Children under 2 years old, people who have trouble breathing, and people who are unable to remove masks on their own should not wear them.

- Create an emergency plan so that you and your family know what you will do, where you will go, and what you will need to take with you to safely weather the storm.
- Review the CDC's guidelines for "[Going to a Public Disaster Shelter During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)"

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN A TORNADO THREATENS

Prepare NOW

- Know your area's tornado risk. In the U.S., the Midwest and the Southeast have a greater risk for tornadoes.
- Know the signs of a tornado, including a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud; an approaching cloud of debris; or a loud roar—similar to a freight train.
- Sign up for your community's warning system. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio also provide emergency alerts. If your community has sirens, then become familiar with the warning tone. Sign up for [email updates](#) about coronavirus from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Pay attention to weather reports. Meteorologists can predict when conditions might be right for a tornado.
- Identify and practice going to a safe shelter, while following the latest social and physical-distancing and other health safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and your local health authorities, in the event of high winds, such as a safe room built using FEMA criteria or a storm shelter built to ICC 500 standards. The next best protection is a small, interior, windowless room on the lowest level of a sturdy building.
- Once you have identified your safe location, prepare for long-term social distancing by gathering emergency supplies, cleaning supplies, non-perishable foods, and water. If you must evacuate to go to a public shelter after a tornado, set aside items to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as soap, [hand sanitizer](#) that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, two masks for each person age 2 and older in the household, disinfecting wipes, and [general household cleaning supplies](#) that you can use to disinfect surfaces you touch regularly. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Don't forget the needs of pets. After a tornado, you may not have access to these supplies for days or even weeks.
 - Being prepared allows you to avoid unnecessary excursions and to address minor medical issues at home, alleviating the burden on urgent care centers and hospitals.

Remember that not everyone can afford to respond by stocking up on necessities. For those who can afford it, making essential purchases and slowly building up supplies in advance will allow for longer time periods between shopping trips. This helps to protect those who are unable to procure essentials in advance of the pandemic and must shop more frequently. In addition, consider avoiding WIC-labeled products so that those who rely on these products can access them.

Survive DURING

- Immediately go to a safe location that you identified.
- Take additional cover by shielding your head and neck with your arms and putting materials such as furniture and blankets around you.
- Listen to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio, or local alerting systems for current emergency information and instructions.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle.
- If you are in a car or outdoors and cannot get to a building, cover your head and neck with your arms and cover your body with a coat or blanket, if possible.

Be Safe AFTER

- Keep listening to EAS, NOAA Weather Radio, and local authorities for updated information.
- If you are trapped, cover your mouth with a cloth or mask to avoid breathing dust. Try to send a text, bang on a pipe or wall, or use a whistle instead of shouting.
- Stay clear of fallen power lines or broken utility lines.
- Do not enter damaged buildings until you are told that they are safe.
- Save your phone calls for emergencies. Phone systems are often down or busy after a disaster. Use text messaging or social media to communicate with family and friends.
- If you are [sick and need medical attention](#), contact your healthcare provider for further care instructions and shelter in place, if possible. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 9-1-1 and let the operator know if you have, or think you might have, COVID-19. If possible, put on a mask before help arrives. If staying at a shelter or public facility, alert shelter staff immediately so they can call a local hospital or clinic.
- Be careful during clean-up. Wear thick-soled shoes, long pants, and work gloves. Use appropriate face coverings or masks if cleaning [mold or other debris](#), and maintain a physical distance of at least six feet while working with someone else.
 - Cloth masks help prevent the spread of COVID-19, but they will not adequately protect you from inhaling mold like a [respirator](#) will. Respirators, like an N-95, are not meant to fit children. Due to COVID-19, it may be difficult to find respirators, such as N-95s.
 - People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled, even if they do not have an allergy to mold. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.
- Continue taking steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, by washing your hands often and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.

- Engage virtually with your community through video and phone calls. Know that it's normal to feel anxious or stressed. Take care of your body and talk to someone if you are feeling upset. Many people may already feel fear and anxiety about the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). The threat of a tornado can add additional stress. Follow CDC guidance for [managing stress during a traumatic event](#) and [managing stress during COVID-19](#).

Associated Content

- [Coronavirus](#) (Federal Government Response)
- [Protective Actions Research for Tornado](#)
- [Tornado Information Sheet](#) (PDF)
- [Taking Shelter from the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House](#) (PDF)
- [American Red Cross](#)

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