

# Tornadoes

Although tornadoes occur in many parts of the world, they are more frequent in the United States. On average, 1,200 tornadoes cause 70 fatalities and 1,500 injuries nationwide each year. Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year and most often strike between 3:00 pm and 9:00 pm. In the southern states, peak tornado season is March through May. In the northern states, peak tornado season is June through August.

## Safety basics

A tornado's path of destruction can be more than one mile wide and 50 miles long and can devastate a neighborhood in seconds. You may have little warning, so preparation and planning are key to reducing injuries. It's important to know what to do before, during, and after a tornado:

### Before

Know a safe place: Know the safe places at home, work and at school. Locate local shelters and be aware of the tornado risk in your county or parish.

- Practice tornado drills at home and school.
- Have a plan for how family members will contact one another during an emergency. Establish an out-of-area contact (such as a relative or family friend) who can coordinate family members' locations and information should you become separated. Make sure children learn the phone numbers and addresses, and know the emergency plans.
- Prepare a family disaster supplies kit. Families with children should have each child create their own personal pack.

### During

During a tornado watch:

- Remain inside, away from windows and doors.
- Listen to the radio or TV. Keep a battery-operated radio or a NOAA Weather Radio.
- Make sure your family disaster supplies kit is complete.
- Be alert during a thunderstorm watch. Severe thunderstorms can produce tornadoes. Being prepared will give you more time should the weather turn severe.

During a tornado warning - Listen to the radio or TV for weather updates and instructions from local officials. Quick action and planning ahead can save your life! If you get caught in a tornado, know what to do: take shelter immediately; stay away from windows, corners, doors and outside walls; be aware of flying debris. Crouch on the floor near an interior wall or under a heavy object, such as a table. Bend over and place your arms on the back of your head and neck (which are injured more easily than other parts of your body).

### After

Continue to listen to the news and weather updates. Stay away from power lines and broken glass. Be aware of the possibility of broken gas lines and chemical spills. If you smell gas or chemical fumes, immediately evacuate the area and contact authorities. Stay out of damaged buildings and return home only after authorities have issued an all-clear signal.