



## Tornado Preparedness

### How to Spot a Tornado

Know the tornado season for your area. In a typical year, tornadoes begin to develop over the Gulf states about February, although they are possible anytime of the year. Hurricanes often spawn tornadoes on the outer fringes of the storm.

**“Know the tornado season for your area. Learn to recognize weather signs. Know what a tornado sounds like.”**

Learn to recognize weather signs. Tornado weather is usually hot, humid and oppressive, with southerly winds. An hour or two before the storm the clouds may have a greenish-black color, and may seem to bulge down instead of up. Rapidly moving lower clouds may be shot with lace-like lightning.

Know what a tornado looks and sounds like. The funnel of a tornado looks like a spinning, twisting rope at its bottom, and fans out into a rotating funnel-shaped cloud extending down from the base of a thundercloud. It is usually gray or black. A nearby tornado usually sounds like the roar of a jet plane or a diesel freight train.

Tornadoes usually move from southwest to northeast. They may form in a series of two or more, with a large primary tornado and one or more secondary or lesser storms. A severe thunderstorm out of the southwest often follows the tornado. Heavy rain and hail may add to the damage of the tornado itself.

Some tornado funnels never touch ground. Some touch down, rise again, and touch down in another place.

This document is IFAS publication DH 1005.

Adapted by UF/IFAS from:  
*Document DH-023,*  
*IFAS Disaster Handbook for*  
*Extension Agents*  
(developed by the  
Cooperative Extension  
Service for the benefit of  
Florida's citizens)

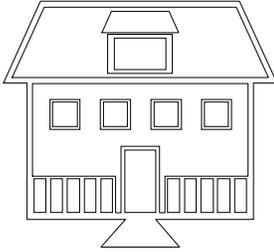
### Where to Go during a Tornado

Knowing what to do during a tornado may mean the difference between life and death. If you hear a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately. Stay away from windows.

- In office buildings—Go to an interior hallway on a lower floor, preferably in the basement, or designated shelter area.
- In factories—Go to the section of the plant offering the greatest

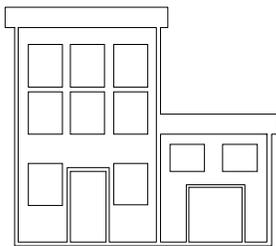
protection. Someone should be responsible for disconnecting fuel lines and electric circuits. Keep a lookout posted.

- In homes—Go to a storm cellar, cave, underground excavation or to the southwest corner of your basement. Get under sturdy furniture, if possible.



If you have no basement, choose an inside wall away from windows and lie flat against it. Central halls, bathrooms, and closets are good places. Get under heavy furniture, if possible, to protect yourself from flying glass and debris. Then, stay away from windows. Keep tuned to a battery-powered radio for latest weather information.

- In mobile homes—Go to the nearest community shelter or other sturdy building if possible. Mobile homes are especially dangerous during high winds and may be overturned. All mobile homes should be tied down.
- In schools—Go to an interior hallway on the lowest floor. Avoid gymnasiums and buildings with large, free-span roofs.
- In shopping centers—Go to a designated shelter area, or lie flat outside in a ditch or a low protected ground. Do not stay in your car, since it is an unsafe place during a tornado.
- In open country—In a car, try to move away from the tornado's path at right angles. (Face the tornado and move to the right or left of it.) Remember, tornados generally move from the southwest to the northeast, therefore, if the tornado appears to be moving toward you, traveling south is the better choice. If you have no time to escape, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, culvert or under a bridge, but not where you could be trapped by flood waters.



## Tornado Warnings—What They Mean

### Tornado Watch

A tornado watch indicates that weather conditions may cause tornados to develop in an area. A watch does not mean that a tornado has been sighted. The watch may cover time periods of up to 8 hours. You should be prepared for a possible tornado.

Residents of the designated area need not seek shelter or disrupt their normal routine during the tornado watch, but they should tune in to radio or TV and be alert for threatening weather conditions.

## Tornado Warning

Tornado warnings are issued by local weather bureau offices when a tornado funnel has actually been sighted or indicated by radar. The warning covers a short period of time and specific small areas. The warning will indicate where the tornado was detected and the area through which it is expected to move. A tornado warning means that persons in the expected path of the storm should take shelter immediately.

## Tornado Survival Rules

Know the difference between a tornado watch or forecast and a tornado warning:

“Know the difference between a tornado watch or forecast and a tornado warning.”

- A tornado watch means that tornado conditions exist in an area.
- A tornado warning means that a tornado has actually been sighted and that residents of the area should take shelter.

Go to a below-ground location if possible: a storm cellar, root cellar, center laundry room or to a center hallway in your house. Stay away from windows. Do not run out into the street or turn into the path of the tornado. Protect yourself against the "sandblasting" effect of flying glass and bits of sharp metal. Cover yourself with an old rug and crouch under heavy furniture.

Listen to instructions on a battery-powered radio. Do not call the weather bureau unless you sight a tornado.

If possible, take important papers and documents to the shelter. Always have them stored for rapid removal. A small suitcase or briefcase is suggested.

Beware of possible dangers:

- Flying objects
- Falling trees
- Broken windows
- Collapsing buildings