

Build It Better! Activity – Tornado Safety Handout

Early Tornado Warning Signs

- Whirling dust or debris on the ground under large clouds.
- A funnel of wind and dust extending from a thundercloud to the ground.
- Hail or heavy rain followed by either dead calm or a fast, strong wind shift.
- Day or night – Loud, continuous roar or rumble, which does not fade in a few seconds like thunder.
- At Night – Small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level near a thunderstorm (as opposed to silvery lightning up in the clouds). These mean power lines are being snapped by very strong winds, maybe a tornado.

WHAT TO DO IF...

You are in a house with a basement: Avoid windows. Get in the basement and under some kind of sturdy protection (heavy table or work bench), or cover yourself with a mattress or sleeping bag. Know where very heavy objects rest on the floor above (pianos, refrigerators, waterbeds, etc.) and do not go under them as they could fall down through a weakened floor and crush you.

You are in a house with no basement, a dorm, or an apartment: Avoid windows. Go to the lowest floor of the building, and find a small center room (like a bathroom or closet), under a stairwell, or in an interior hallway with no windows. Crouch as low as possible to the floor, facing down; cover your head with your hands. A bath tub may offer some protection. Even in an interior room, you should cover yourself with some sort of thick padding (mattress, blankets, etc.), to protect against falling objects in case the roof and ceiling fail.

You are in an office building, hospital, nursing home or skyscraper: Go directly to an enclosed, windowless area in the center of the building — away from glass. Then, crouch down and cover your head. Interior stairwells are usually good places to take shelter, and if not crowded, allow you to get to a lower level quickly. Stay off the elevators; you could be trapped in them if the power is lost.

You are in a mobile home: Get out! Even if your home is tied down, you are probably safer outside, even if the only alternative is to seek shelter out in the open. Most tornadoes can destroy even tied-down mobile homes; it is best not to play the low odds that yours will make it. If your community has a tornado shelter, go there fast. If there is a sturdy permanent building within easy running distance, seek shelter there. Otherwise, lie flat on low ground away from your home, protecting your head. If possible, use open ground away from trees and cars, which can be blown onto you.

You are at school: Follow the drill! Go to the interior hall or room in an orderly way as you are told. Crouch low, head down, and protect the back of your head with your arms. Stay away from windows and large open rooms like gyms and auditoriums.

You are in a car or truck: Vehicles are extremely dangerous in a tornado. If the tornado is visible, far away, and the traffic is light, you may be able to drive out of its path by moving at right angles to the tornado. Otherwise, park the car as quickly and safely as possible — out of the traffic lanes. Get out and seek shelter in a sturdy building. If in the open country, run to low ground, away from any cars (which may roll over on you). Lie flat and face-down, protecting the back of your head with your arms. Avoid seeking shelter under bridges, which can create deadly traffic hazards while offering little protection against flying debris.

You are in the open outdoors: If possible, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If not, lie flat and face-down on low ground, protecting the back of your head with your arms. Get as far away from trees and cars as you can; they may be blown onto you in a tornado.

You are in a shopping mall or large store: Do not panic. Watch for others. Move as quickly as possible to an interior bathroom, storage room or other small enclosed area, away from windows. Crouch face-down and protect your head with your arms.

You are in a church or theater: Do not panic. If possible, move quickly but orderly to an interior bathroom or hallway, away from windows. Crouch face-down and protect your head with your arms. If there is no time to do that, get under the seats or pews, protecting your head with your arms or hands.

AFTER THE TORNADO...

Keep your family together and wait for emergency personnel to arrive. Stay away from power lines and puddles with wires in them; they may still be carrying electricity! Watch your step to avoid broken glass, nails, and other sharp objects. Stay out of any heavily damaged houses or buildings; they could collapse at any time. Do not use matches or lighters, in case of leaking natural gas pipes or fuel tanks nearby. Remain calm and alert, and listen for information and instructions from emergency crews or local officials.

Source: <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/safety.html>