

# What to Do Before, During, and After a Tornado

When a tornado is coming, you have only a short amount of time to make a life-or-death decision. Advance planning, quick response, and a diligent recovery effort are the keys to survival.

## Before

- Conduct tornado drills each tornado season
- Designate an area in the home as a shelter and practice having everyone in the household go there if there is a threat of a tornado
- Have disaster supplies on hand:
  - Flashlight and extra batteries
  - Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
  - First-aid kit and manual
  - Emergency food and water
  - Non-electric can opener
  - Essential medicines
  - Cash and credit cards
  - Sturdy shoes
  - Cellular phone
- If household members are separated during a tornado, have a meeting place for getting back together
- Designate one or two out-of-state relatives and friends as emergency contacts; after a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance
- Contact your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter for more information on tornadoes

Know the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning. The National Weather Service issues a **tornado watch** when tornadoes are likely to develop. If a watch is issued, remind household members of where to go, and listen to the radio or TV for further developments. A **tornado warning** is issued when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar; everyone should go to a safe place, turn on a battery-operated radio, and wait for further instructions.

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## During

### *At Home:*

- Go at once to the basement or storm cellar
- If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or a closet
- Stay away from windows
- Go to the center of the room; stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture, such as a workbench or heavy table, and hold on to it if possible
- Use your arms, a heavy blanket or pillow to help protect your head and neck
- If you are in a mobile home, get out and try to find shelter elsewhere

### *At Work or School:*

- Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest level of the building
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias and large hallways
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture, such as a heavy table or desk, and hold on to it
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck

### *Outdoors:*

- If possible, get inside a building
- If shelter isn't available and there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a sturdy building
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck

### *In a Car:*

- Leave the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building
- If shelter isn't available and there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a sturdy building
- Never try to out-drive a tornado in a car or truck; tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift and toss your vehicle through the air

### *After*

- Help injured or trapped persons
- Give first aid when appropriate; don't move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury; call for help
- Turn on the radio or television to get the latest information

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- Stay out of damaged buildings; return home only when authorities say it's safe
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleach, gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately
- Leave a building if you smell gas or chemical fumes
- Take pictures of damage to the house and its contents for insurance purposes
- Help neighbors who may require special assistance like people with infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities

**Additional Resources:**

[www.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes](http://www.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes)

[weather.com/safety/tornado](http://weather.com/safety/tornado)

[www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/tornado](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/tornado)

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