



Tornado Preparedness

How to Prevent Injuries from Tornadoes

What is the Problem?

In 2011 a series of deadly tornadoes destroyed parts of Alabama and Missouri, killing hundreds of people.¹ Although extremely violent EF5 tornadoes are rare, about 180 people are killed each year from these violent storms.² Tornadoes can develop during severe thunderstorms with winds in excess of 200 mph and may range in width from several hundred yards to more than a mile across.³ While tornadoes can occur year-round, tornado season lasts from March to August and most tornadoes occur between 3:00 and 9:00 pm.⁴



Who is at Risk?

Roughly 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide throughout the entire year, so anyone in the US is at risk for a tornado in their area.⁵ However, most tornadoes occur east of the Colorado-Wyoming-New Mexico area and found in the area from Kansas to Kentucky, the Great Plains, and the Upper Midwest.⁶ “Tornado Alley” includes Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas.⁷

Prevention Tips

Knowing what to do when you see a tornado, or when you hear a tornado warning, can help protect you and your family. Follow the tips below:

- Learn your community’s warning system. Many use the Emergency Alert System to warn residents of potential hazards.⁸
- Be prepared with an emergency kit that includes batteries, a battery-operated radio, water, non-perishable food, medications, and a list of important information including telephone numbers.⁹
- Pay close attention to changing weather conditions in your area. If you know thunderstorms are expected, stay tuned to local radio and TV stations for further information.¹⁰
- Know the signs that a tornado may be approaching: dark or green-colored sky, large/dark/low-lying clouds, large hail, and a loud roar that sounds like a freight train.¹¹
- Find shelter during a tornado because flying debris can cause injury and death. Go to a basement or an inside room without windows on the lowest floor, avoid windows, take cover under something sturdy, cover your body with a blanket, and protect your head.¹²



Plan of the Week (POW):

Tornadoes kill roughly 180 people per year, so it is important to recognize the signs of a storm and to find shelter when necessary.¹³ To stay safe during a tornado, prepare a plan and emergency kit, stay aware of weather conditions during thunderstorms, know the best places to shelter both indoors and outdoors, and always protect your head.¹⁴ **NEVER** ignore warnings from local authorities concerning storm conditions and practice tornado drills with your families to make sure everyone is prepared.¹⁵

References

- 1,9-12,14 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Staying Safe in a Tornado. <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/tornadosafety/>. Updated 8 April 2013. Accessed 23 September 2013.
- 2-8,13,15 Federal Emergency Management Agency. Tornadoes. http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=13&ved=0CHUQFjAM&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fema.gov%2Fmedia-library-data%2F20130726-1838-25045-5794%2Fhazard8_tornadoes_ig_jan2011.doc&ei=EGZAUqawBsvcqQGAoY-CwDw&usg=AFQjCNFO9JkKksJSq5xZK7e_Sw0pFKMTlw&sig2=pr3HDDSzLSSb1SezaiVwg&bvm=bv.52434380,d.aWM&cad=rja. Accessed 23 September 2013.

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcpHC/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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