



Office of  
Emergency  
Management

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Learning About

# TORNADOES



# TORNADO FACTS

- 01** A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground.
- 02** Tornadoes are capable of destroying homes and vehicles and can cause deaths.
- 03** Tornadoes may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel. The average tornado moves southwest to northeast but tornadoes have been known to travel in any direction.
- 04** Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land.
- 05** The average forward speed is 30 mph but may vary from stationary to 70 mph and have rotating winds in excess of 250 mph.
- 06** Tornadoes can occur any time of the year.
- 07** Similar to other southern states, peak tornado season in Florida is March through May; however, historically, the deadliest tornadoes in Central Florida have been known to occur as early as February.
- 08** Waterspouts are tornadoes that form over water.

## TORNADO DANGER SIGNS

Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that advance warning is not possible. Some warning signs of a tornado are a dark, often greenish sky, large hail, wall cloud and loud roar, similar to the sound of a freight train.

Some tornadoes are clearly visible, while rain or nearby low-hanging clouds obscure others. Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still. Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

**Tornado Watch** – This watch is issued by the National Weather Service when a tornado is possible in the area. This is the time to locate a safe place in the home and tell family members to watch the sky and listen to a NOAA weather radio or weather reports on an AM/FM radio or television for more information.

**Tornado Warning** – This warning is issued by the National Weather Service when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. At this point, the danger is very serious, and everyone should go to a safe place, turn on a battery-operated NOAA weather radio and wait for the warning to expire.

# PRECAUTIONS BEFORE A TORNADO

- Do not get under an overpass or bridge. A low, flat location is safer.
- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement or in a safe room.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor; turn over a sturdy piece of furniture and get underneath it. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
- Listen to a battery-operated NOAA weather radio and news reports on television and AM/FM radio.
- Stay away from windows. Go to the center of the home. Stay away from corners because they attract debris.
- Get out of automobiles immediately and seek shelter in a nearby building. If a building is unavailable or there is no time, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the car. Be aware of the potential for flooding. In urban or congested areas, never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle; immediately abandon it for shelter. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a vehicle and toss it in the air.
- If caught outside, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the potential for flooding
- Be aware of flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes can cause fatalities and injuries.
- Do not open windows, use time to seek shelter.