



Disaster

readiness · response · recovery

Tornado Preparedness

Although North Carolina has fewer tornadoes than some midwestern states, we still face an average of 12 to 15 tornadoes a year. On March 28, 1984, tornadoes took the lives of 42 North Carolinians, and injured 801. On November 28, 1988, a single deadly tornado killed four and injured 154, leaving 982 homeless. This storm stayed on the ground for 83 miles on a path from Raleigh to Northampton County! Other tornadoes, although less severe, have wreaked havoc on North Carolina residents.

Tornadoes are violent windstorm characterized by a twisting, funnel-shaped cloud. These naturally occurring phenomena can form as spin-offs of a hurricane or accompany a thunderstorm. While many tornadoes never touch ground or do not affect populated areas, those that do can cause significant property damage in a short time.

How to Spot a Tornado

Tornadoes are most common between March and June in North Carolina, although they may occur anytime of the year. Hurricanes may also spawn tornadoes.

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 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. 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.

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,

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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—Get to the lowest level of your home in an interior room as far away from exterior walls and windows as possible.

If you have no basement, choose an inside wall away from windows and sit flat against it. Central halls, bathrooms, and closets are good choices. 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. Mobile homes are especially dangerous during high winds and may be overturned. If you cannot get to a shelter or sturdy building, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert, and cover your head with your hands.
- 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. A tornado can pick it up and toss it.

- In a car—If you are in the open country, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert, but not where you could be trapped by floodwaters.

Tornado Watch and Warning— What They Mean

Tornado Watch

A tornado watch indicates that weather conditions may cause tornadoes to develop in your area. A watch does not mean that a tornado has been sighted. The watch may last up to 8 hours. You should be prepared for a possible tornado.

You don't need to move to a shelter, but keep a radio or TV on and be alert for threatening weather conditions.

Tornado Warning

Local weather bureau offices issue a tornado warning 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. If you are in the expected path of the storm, take shelter immediately.

Tornado Survival Rules

Know the difference between a tornado watch 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 you should take shelter.

Do not go outside to look for the tornado. Go to a below-ground location, if possible. If not, stay on the lowest level of your house. A storm cellar, root cellar, center laundry room, bathroom with no exterior walls, or to a center hallway in your house are possible choices. 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.

Beware of possible dangers:

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

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