



Tornadoes

What is a tornado?

A tornado is nature's most violent storm. It appears as a violently rotating column of air that extends from a thunderstorm cloud to the ground. Some are clearly seen; others may be hidden by rain or other low-hanging clouds. Tornado winds can reach 250 miles per hour or more and the damage path can be more than one mile wide and 50 miles long. A tornado may strike quickly, with little or no warning. Tornadoes are most often reported in the southern states between March and May.

Why is a tornado dangerous?

A tornado can cause deaths and destroy anything in its path in seconds. The wind, tossing around trees, wood, glass and anything else in its path, is responsible for the majority of deaths and damages.

What should I look for?

- Dark, often greenish sky
- Large hail
- Loud roaring sound, like a freight train
- Large, dark, low-lying cloud (may be rotating) that looks like a wall

Know your terms!

Tornado watch means a tornado is possible, due to weather conditions. Be alert for a storm moving your way. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio and local media for more information.

Tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted or is indicated on weather radar. If a warning is issued for your area, move to shelter immediately.

Protective measures for people and animals:

- If you are in a building or your home, go to the center of the structure to an inside room on the lowest level, such as a closet or hallway. Stay away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls. Do not open the windows. Get under a sturdy table or piece of furniture and use your arms to protect your head and neck. If you are at home, bring your pets inside with you.
- If you are outside with no shelter, lie flat in a ditch or low area on the ground. Cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the risk of flooding and flying debris. Do not get under a bridge or overpass. Never try to outrun a tornado in your car or truck. Leave the vehicle for safer shelter.
- If you are in a mobile home, vehicle or trailer, get out immediately. Take your pet. Even if tied down, these offer very little protection from tornadoes. Go to a sturdy building if nearby. If not, lie down a safe distance in a ditch or low area, away from the unit or vehicle.

Have an emergency plan.

Pick an area in the home to use as your severe weather safe area. Practice having everyone in the family go to this area in response to a tornado threat.

Have a plan for getting your family back together in case family members are separated during a tornado (very possible if adults are at work and children are at school).

Have a NOAA weather radio with a warning alarm tone and battery backup to receive warnings.

Keep a disaster supply kit on hand, stocked with the following items:

- Water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days)
- Non-perishable foods and any special dietary products (enough for three days)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Small tool kit and non-electric can opener
- Most needed medicines
- Extra set of car keys, cash and credit card
- An extra change of clothes and sturdy shoes
- Personal hygiene supplies

Safety after the tornado:

- Check for injuries. Do not attempt to move a seriously injured person unless he is in immediate danger of further injury. Call 9-1-1 for medical assistance as soon as possible.
- Stay tuned to your battery-operated radio for emergency updates.
- Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves and gloves when walking in or touching anything in an area struck by a tornado.
- Be very careful when entering any structure that has been damaged.
- Report any downed power lines or outages. Stay away from downed power lines or anything touching a downed line.
- Do not use a candle or torch at any time for any reason. If it is dark when you inspect your home, use a flashlight to avoid the risk of fire or an explosion from a gas leak. If you suspect or see damage, turn off the electrical power, natural gas or propane tank to avoid fire, electrocution or explosions.
- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open the windows and leave immediately. Notify the gas company as soon as possible.
- Report any damage to your insurance agent.

For more information call the Guilford County Department of Public Health or visit our website at www.myguilford.com or visit the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at www.noaa.gov or American Red Cross at www.redcross.org