

TORNADO SAFETY



Illinois ranks 5th in the United States for the most tornadoes (per 10,000 square miles). On potential severe weather days, doing the following things could save your life:

- **Keep up with the weather situation throughout the day – especially at night**
- **Identify safe indoor shelters**
- **Have several sources to receive weather information**
- **Know the name of the county you live in, and the counties you travel through**
- **Make sure family members and friends know how to stay safe**
- **If it is safe to do so, contact family members & friends when you become aware of a tornado that may threaten them**

The chances of being affected by a tornado may seem small, but if your area could be threatened by one, act QUICKLY when the threat is confirmed! Use the information below to be prepared for the threat of tornadoes.

BEFORE A TORNADO

Know the terms used to describe tornado threats:

Tornado Watch -- **Tornadoes are possible near your area.** Stay alert for the latest weather information. Be prepared to take shelter. If you see any rotating funnel-shaped clouds, report them immediately by telephone to your local EMA, ESDA, or law enforcement agency. **If you live in a mobile home, this is the time to move to a more substantial structure.**

Tornado Warning -- **A tornado has been sighted by someone or indicated by weather radar.** The storms may also produce damaging winds in excess of 60 mph and/or hail 1.00” or larger. Take shelter immediately. Turn on a battery-operated radio or television and wait for updated information for your area.

- **It is critical that someone at home, work, or wherever people gather, monitors weather conditions, regardless of the time of day!** Many deadly tornadoes occur at night. Use a weather alert radio, local TV and radio, or the Internet to monitor watches and warnings for your area. **Don’t rely completely on outdoor warning sirens – especially if you’re asleep!!**
- **If you live in a mobile home, identify a safe shelter outside of your mobile home** such as a community storm shelter, a neighbor or friend’s house, or a nearby public building. Half of all tornado fatalities occur in mobile homes – even though they only account for 7% of all residences.

- **Purchase a Weather Alert Radio** with a battery backup, a tone-alert feature, and Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) technology which automatically alerts you when a Watch or Warning is issued for your county.
- **Determine the best location in your home and office to seek shelter when threatened by a tornado.** A basement or cellar will usually afford the best protection. If an underground shelter is not available, identify an interior room or hallway on the lowest level. Closets, small interior hallways, and bathrooms without windows are the best areas.
- **Maintain a disaster supply kit.** This kit will help your family cope during extended power outages in the aftermath of a storm.
- **Conduct periodic tornado safety drills at home AND at work.** Decide how and where everyone will gather prior to, and after the storm.
- **Consider retrofitting your house** with special fasteners, connectors and reinforcing bands to strengthen the structural integrity. Also, **consider installing a reinforced concrete and steel “safe room”** as a small room within your house, or excavated and installed in your yard, or beneath your garage floor.

DURING A TORNADO

Take the following actions when a **Tornado Warning** has been issued by the National Weather Service, when sirens have been activated, or when a tornado has been sighted near your area.

AT HOME

- **Go immediately to your predetermined shelter** (storm cellar, basement or the lowest level of the building). In a basement, go under the stairs, under a heavy piece of furniture or a work bench. Stay there until the danger has passed.
- **If in a mobile home, get out and seek shelter elsewhere, well before the storm arrives.** A mobile home can overturn very easily even if precautions have been taken to tie down the unit. If there isn't a substantial shelter nearby, go to a low-lying area, and shield your head with your hands.
- **If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a small inner room without windows,** such as a bathroom or closet. Outside windows and walls may be penetrated by high speed, wind-borne missiles.
- **Get under a piece of sturdy furniture**, such as a workbench or heavy table, and hold onto it. **Use pillows, mattresses or cushions to protect your head and neck.**

IN A SCHOOL, NURSING HOME, HOSPITAL, SHOPPING CENTER, OR WORKPLACE

- **Go to the designated storm shelter.** A basement offers the best protection. If a basement is not available, go to a sturdy, interior room without windows on the lowest level. Stay away from exterior walls, doors and windows.,
- **Avoid places with wide-span roofs**, such as auditoriums, cafeterias, gymnasiums and large hallways. Stay away from windows and open spaces.
- **Get under a piece of sturdy furniture**, such as a workbench, heavy table or desk, and hold onto it. If sturdy furniture is not available, make yourself the smallest target possible. Squat low to the ground. Put your head down and cover your head and neck with your hands.
- **If in a high-rise building, go to small, interior rooms or hallways on the lowest level possible** and seek protection as detailed above. Stay away from windows and outside walls.

OUTDOORS

- **If possible, get inside a substantial building**, on the lowest floor – away from windows and doors.
- **If an indoor shelter is not available**, or there is no time to get indoors, as a last resort **lie in a ditch or culvert**. Use your arms to protect your head and neck. Stay aware of the potential for flash flooding.

IN A VEHICLE

- **Do NOT park under a bridge or overpass!**
- **Safely get out of the vehicle immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.**
- **Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle.** Heavy rain, hail and traffic may impede your movement. Tornadoes can change directions quickly and can easily lift up a vehicle and toss it through the air.
- **As a VERY last resort**, if there isn't time to get indoors – or if there is no secure shelter nearby, lie flat in a ditch, culvert, or low-lying area away from your vehicle.

AFTER A TORNADO

- **Monitor the radio or television** for emergency information or instructions.
- **Be extremely careful in areas of downed power lines or natural gas leaks.** Wear adequate footwear to avoid cuts from broken glass or nails protruding from boards.
- **Check for injured victims.** Render first aid if necessary. **Do not attempt to move severely injured victims unless absolutely necessary.** Wait for emergency medical assistance to arrive.
- **Check on neighbors or relatives** who may require special assistance.
- **Exit damaged buildings.** Re-enter only if absolutely necessary using great caution.
- **Take photos or video of the damage to your home and property, and report it to local emergency managers.**
- **If unaffected by the tornado, stay out of the damaged area until local officials allow entry. Your presence will hamper emergency operations.**