

Tornado Procedures

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground and is often—although not always—visible as a funnel cloud. Lightning and hail are common in thunderstorms that produce tornadoes. Tornadoes can strike in any season and can occur at all hours of the day and night.

The destruction and injury caused by a tornado depends on the intensity, size, path, time of day, and amount of time they are on the ground. Wind from tornadoes can reach more than 200 miles per hour, and damage paths can be more than 1 mile wide and 50 miles long.

When a tornado threatens, your goal is to go to the safest place for protection before the tornado hits and to take additional measures for personal cover. In a sturdy building, a small, interior, windowless room, such as a closet or bathroom, on the lowest level of the building provides moderate protection. A floor below ground is best. Some locations do not provide protection from tornadoes, including: manufactured (mobile) homes/offices, the open space of open-plan buildings (e.g., malls, big retail stores, and gymnasiums), vehicles, and the outdoors.

Having advance notice that a tornado is approaching your area can give you the critical time needed to move to a place with better protection. Pay attention to weather reports and sign up for text alerts and smart phone apps that provide weather warnings.

National Weather Service (NWS), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), issues tornado alerts when weather conditions occur that make tornadoes more likely. Watches and warnings are intended to provide adequate time for action.

- NWS issues a **tornado watch** when weather conditions in an area indicate an increased risk for severe weather that may be capable of producing a tornado.
- NWS issues a **tornado warning** when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. **On average, tornado warnings are issued 13 minutes prior to the event, but warning times vary greatly and may be much less.** Even if you have been through a tornado warning without experiencing any damage, remember that tornadoes are unpredictable and you should ALWAYS take immediate action when authorities issue a tornado warning.

To ensure that you are able to act quickly and get the best available protection during a tornado, you need to plan ahead. *Planning and practicing specifically how and where you take cover for protection may save your life.*

Although not specifically designed to protect against tornadoes, there are some areas in a sturdy building that may provide moderate protection, depending on the intensity of the tornado and how close it comes to your location.

If you are in:	Then:
A structure (e.g. residence, small building, school, classroom, hospital, high-rise building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to a pre-designated area such as a basement, or the lowest building level. If there is no basement, go to the center of a small interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to protect your head and neck. • In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible. • Do not open windows.
A manufactured home or office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out immediately and go to a pre-identified location such as the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building. Mobile homes and modular buildings, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes.
The outside with no shelter	<p>If you are not in a sturdy building, there is no single research-based recommendation for what last-resort action to take because many factors can affect your decision. Possible actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If your vehicle is hit by flying debris while you are driving, pull over and park. • Take cover in a stationary vehicle. Put the seat belt on and cover your head with your arms and a blanket, coat or other cushion if possible. • Lie in an area noticeably lower than the level of the roadway and cover your head with your arms and a blanket, coat or other cushion if possible. <p>In all situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location. • Never try to outrun a tornado in urban or congested areas in a car or truck. Instead, leave the vehicle immediately for safe shelter. • Watch out for flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries.

University of Cincinnati (UC) Severe Weather (Tornado) Shelter locations for all buildings may be located on the UC Emergency Management website under Public Safety's www.uc.edu/publicsafety.