

Tornado Safety (from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA)

If at home:

Go at once to the basement, storm cellar, or the lowest level of the building. If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or a smaller inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet. Get away from the windows. Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris. Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it. Use arms to protect head and neck.

If in a mobile home:

Get out and find shelter elsewhere.

If at work or school:

Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest level. Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or shopping malls. Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it. Use arms to protect head and neck.

If outdoors:

If possible, get inside a building. If shelter is not available or there is no time to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Be aware of the potential for flooding. Use arms to protect head and neck.

If in a car:

Never try to out drive a tornado in a car or truck. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck and toss it through the air. Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building. If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle. Be aware of the potential for flooding.

After the tornado:

Help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid when appropriate. Do not try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help. Turn on radio or television to get the latest emergency information. Stay out of damaged buildings. Return home only when authorities say it is safe. Use the telephone only for emergency calls. Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the buildings if you smell gas or chemical fumes. Take pictures of the damage—to both the house and its contents—for insurance purposes. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance—infants, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Inspecting utilities in a damaged home:

Check for gas leaks—if you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, a professional must turn it back on.