

Tornado Preparedness & Shelter Checklist

A practical checklist for warnings, shelter, supplies, family planning and post-tornado safety.

BEFORE SEVERE WEATHER

- Identify the safest tornado shelter available to your household.
- Make sure every household member knows exactly where to go.
- If you live in a mobile or manufactured home, identify a nearby sturdy shelter in advance.
- Enable Wireless Emergency Alerts and local emergency notifications on phones.
- Have a second warning method, such as a NOAA Weather Radio.
- Practice the route to your shelter from bedrooms and common living areas.
- Keep the shelter and route clear of clutter.
- Plan for children, pets, medications and mobility limitations.

KEEP IN OR NEAR THE SHELTER

- Reliable flashlight or headlamp and appropriate spare batteries/charging.
- Weather radio and charged phone/power bank.
- Basic first-aid kit and necessary prescription medications.
- Sturdy closed-toe shoes or boots.
- Work gloves and basic eye/dust protection.
- Drinking water.
- Whistle for signaling if trapped.
- Pet leash/carrier and essential pet supplies.
- Blankets or padding that can provide additional debris protection if already nearby.

DURING A TORNADO WATCH

- Monitor official weather information closely.
- Charge phones, radios and power banks.
- Bring pets closer and keep carriers/leashes accessible.
- Review the shelter plan with everyone in the household.
- Put sturdy shoes and medications near the shelter.
- Avoid unnecessary travel as severe weather approaches.
- Be prepared to act immediately if a warning is issued.

DURING A TORNADO WARNING

- Take shelter immediately - do not wait to see the tornado.
- Use a purpose-built safe room, basement, storm cellar, or small interior windowless room on the lowest floor of a sturdy building.
- Stay away from windows and exterior walls when possible.
- Get low and protect your head and neck.
- Use nearby sturdy furniture, blankets or padding for added debris protection when practical.
- Do not waste time opening windows.
- Do not use an overpass or bridge as a tornado shelter.
- Continue monitoring official alerts and remain sheltered until the immediate threat has passed.

MOBILE HOME / VEHICLE / OUTDOOR SAFETY

- Do not use a mobile or manufactured home as your tornado shelter.
- Move to your predetermined sturdy shelter early enough to reach it safely.
- If driving, seek the closest sturdy shelter rather than trying to outrun the tornado.

- If no sturdy shelter is reachable, follow current official guidance for last-resort protection based on conditions.
- If outdoors, get into a sturdy building whenever possible.
- If absolutely no shelter is available, protect your head and neck in a low-lying area while remaining alert for flooding.

AFTER THE TORNADO

- Check yourself and others for injuries and request medical help when available.
- If trapped, text, whistle or bang on a wall/pipe to attract attention.
- Treat heavily damaged buildings as unsafe until they can be assessed.
- Stay away from downed power lines and keep pets and children away.
- Leave the area if you suspect a gas leak and contact emergency/utility services from a safe location.
- Use flashlights instead of candles around damaged structures.
- Operate generators only outdoors in safe locations away from openings.
- Follow local drinking-water advisories.
- Wear sturdy boots, work gloves, long pants and eye protection during cleanup.
- Photograph property damage when safe before major cleanup or temporary repairs.
- Continue monitoring official information for additional storms and local hazards.

Remember: A tornado warning is the time to take shelter, not finish preparations. Follow current instructions from the National Weather Service and local emergency officials.