

# Tornado Safety

## For Rural Communities

Each year, the United States experiences an average of 1,200 tornadoes. Many strike rural areas and cause little damage, and most have paths well under one mile in length and winds under 100 mph. However, a few tornadoes can become large and violent, with wind speeds approaching 300 mph, tracking tens of miles and leaving swaths of destruction and death.

In Kentucky, tornadoes have occurred during every month of the year and at every hour of the day. However, they occur most frequently from March through June and typically between 3 and 10 PM. Nighttime tornadoes are often more dangerous as they are harder to see and most people are sleeping.



When tornado warnings are issued from the National Weather Service, NOAA Weather Radios relay these warnings to Kentucky's population. Some communities relay weather information via additional methods, such as sirens. Contact your community leaders, local emergency manager, and/or cooperative extension office to find out what methods are available in your community.

**Tornado Watch (PREPARE):** A Tornado Watch is issued by the National Weather Service when conditions will be favorable for the development of tornadoes. (Can be a large region, usually issued hours in advance)

**Tornado Warning (TAKE ACTION):** A Tornado Warning is issued by the National Weather Service when a tornado is likely to develop, or someone has observed a tornado ongoing. (Small scale, issued minutes in advance).

## The Signs of a Tornado

Besides a visible, rotating funnel in contact with the ground, watch and listen for:

1. Loud, continuous roar or rumble, which doesn't fade in a few seconds like thunder.
2. Strong, persistent rotation in the cloud base, often with a dark, greenish sky.
3. Whirling dust or debris on the ground under a cloud base — tornadoes sometimes have no visible funnel, even though they are still in contact with the ground!
4. Hail or heavy rain followed by a dead calm and/or fast, intense wind shift. Many tornadoes are wrapped in precipitation and cannot be seen.
5. At night — persistent lowering from the cloud base, illuminated or silhouetted by lightning and possibly in contact with the ground. Small, bright blue-green to white flashes at ground level near a thunderstorm are an indicator that power lines are being snapped by very strong wind, possibly a tornado.



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### BEFORE A TORNADO:

- ✓ **BE WEATHER READY...** Tornadoes can occur at any time of the day and year. See reverse side for more information.
- ✓ **CREATE A PLAN...** Have a family plan that includes an emergency meeting place and shelter space. The best shelter is a basement, storm cellar, or other interior room on the lowest floor with no windows.
- ✓ **PRACTICE A PLAN...** Consider practicing what you will do if a tornado approaches. Ensure that every family member knows where to take shelter during a tornado.
- ✓ **CREATE A SAFETY KIT...** Make sure you have items ready to go in case you find yourself in an emergency. Some items could include shoes, flashlight, batteries, water, whistle, telephone numbers for authorities, copies of identification and other important documents.
- ✓ **PREPARE YOUR HOME...** Reinforcing your shelter space could increase the survivability during a tornado. For additional information, contact your local emergency management or cooperative extension office.
- ✓ **HELP YOUR NEIGHBOR...** Encourage your extended family and neighbors to prepare for the possibility of tornadoes.

### DURING A TORNADO:

- ✓ **AT YOUR HOUSE...** If you see or hear a tornado, immediately go to your basement, storm shelter, or interior room away from windows. Under a sturdy table or work bench is ideal. Know where very heavy objects rest on the floor above (pianos, chests, etc.) and do not go under them. They may fall through a weakened floor. If no basement, go to the lowest floor, small interior room, under a stairwell, or interior hallway with no windows. Don't forget pets if time allows. Keep your head protected! Cover our head with hands, arms, mattress, or heavy blanket.

- ✓ **AT YOUR WORKPLACE OR SCHOOL...** Proceed to a small interior location away from outside doors and glass windows. Cover your head.
- ✓ **AT CHURCH...** If possible, move quickly to an interior room away from windows. If not possible, get under seats or pews and protect head with arms and hands.
- ✓ **IN AN OUTBUILDING OR TEMPORARY SHELTER...** Seek shelter inside a sturdy building away from windows and doors. Poorly constructed buildings can be torn to pieces and become wind-driven projectiles. A buggy is not a safe shelter!
- ✓ **OUTSIDE WITHOUT NEARBY SHELTER...** Get as low as possible, such as a such as a ditch or ravine, lie flat face down to avoid flying debris, and protect the back of head with your arms.

### AFTER A TORNADO:

- ✓ **STAY AWARE...** If the weather is still threatening, remain vigilant for additional storms. The next round of storms could bring another tornado or heavy rains/flooding. If able, continue listening for additional alerts and warnings.
- ✓ **ENSURE YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY...** Locate each family member and check for injuries. Carefully administer or seek medical assistance as appropriate.
- ✓ **HELP YOUR NEIGHBOR...** If you see someone who is trapped or injured, provide assistance or seek additional help if needed.
- ✓ **ASSESS THE DAMAGE...** After the tornado threat has ended, check for property damage. Be careful when walking through storm damage and watch for broken glass, nails, and other sharp objects. Be especially careful in heavily damaged buildings which could collapse. Stay away from downed power lines; they can be an electrocution hazard. Call authorities.



**TORNADO SAFETY**  
**FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY**

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