

# TORNADOES 101

A tornado is defined as a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. In an average year, 800 tornadoes are reported nationwide, resulting in 80 deaths and over 1500 injuries. Tornadoes can occur anywhere at any time of the year. In the southern states, peak tornado occurrence is in March through May. Tornadoes are also closely associated with hurricanes and often occur during Hurricane Season, June 1st through November 30th. The southern states are also susceptible to waterspouts - weak tornadoes that form over warm water. Waterspouts sometimes move inland, becoming tornadoes, causing damage and injuries.

Know what to listen for...

A ***Tornado Watch*** is issued when tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

A ***Tornado Warning*** is issued when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Move to your pre-designated place of safety

Stay informed of weather conditions by tuning into local radio and television stations or by listening to NOAA Weather Radio for the latest tornado watches and warnings. Remember, tornadoes occasionally develop in areas in which a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is in effect, so listen for that information as well. Remain alert!

## Know what to look for... Environmental Clues

- dark, often greenish sky
- wall cloud
- large hail
- loud roar, similar to a freight train
- some tornadoes appear as a visible funnel extending only partially to the ground.
- some tornadoes are clearly visible while other are obscured by rain or nearby low-hanging clouds

## **Know what you can do... Tornado Safety**

### *Before the Storm*

- Develop a plan for you and your family for home, work, school, and when outdoors.
- Have frequent drills.
- Know the county in which you live, and keep a highway map nearby to follow storm movement from weather bulletins.
- Listen to radio and television for information.
- If planning a trip outdoors, listen to the latest forecasts and take necessary action if threatening weather is possible.
- Know who is most at risk:
  - people in automobiles
  - the elderly, very young, and the physically or mentally impaired
  - people in manufactured (mobile) homes
  - people who may not understand the warning due to a language barrier

### *If a Warning is issued or if threatening weather approaches...*

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as basement.
- If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.
- Stay away from windows.
- Get out of automobiles.
- Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car; instead, leave it immediately.
- If caught outside or in a vehicle, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression.
- Manufactured (mobile) homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes and should be abandoned.

Each year, many people are killed or seriously injured by tornadoes despite advance warning. Some did not hear the warning while others received the warning but did not believe a tornado would actually affect them. After you have received the warning or observed threatening skies, YOU must make the decision to seek shelter before the storm arrives. *It could be the most important decision you will ever make.*