

Seek Safety to Escape a Tornado

Knowing where to go for protection during a tornado may be the difference between life and death. If you hear a tornado warning or see a tornado, seek shelter immediately. Basements, storm cellars, the ground floor of a sturdy structure, a nearby culvert or a deep ditch are possible shelters. Stay away from windows and protect your head. Specific options are given in *Tornado Safety*, FSA-1024.

Office Buildings

Go to an interior hallway on a lower floor, preferably the basement or an area designated as a shelter in advance. If you're unfamiliar with the building choose the basement, or if there isn't a basement, go to the ground floor. Electric power failure may trap you, if you use an elevator.

Factories, Auditoriums and Other Large Buildings with Wide-Span Roofs

These buildings are vulnerable to wind damage due to the distance between roof supports. Basements and pre-selected safe areas with adequate interior structures are preferred. Trained building employees should disconnect fuel lines and electric circuits. Trained tornado spotters should maintain a lookout from the time threatening conditions develop until the danger is past.

Homes

Storm cellars, caves and underground excavations provide excellent protection during a tornado. Otherwise, seek refuge near a basement wall in the most sheltered and deepest part of the basement below ground. Consider sturdy central halls, closets or interior bathrooms if there isn't below-ground shelter. Where these options aren't available, take cover in the smallest room with stout walls near the center of the house. Stay on the lowest floor and pull heavy furniture over your body (head, especially) to protect yourself from broken glass and airborne debris. Take refuge and use an available NOAA weather radio, TV or radio to keep updated on the path of the tornado and when it is safe to resume normal activities.

Mobile Homes and Modular Buildings

Arrange for the use of another convenient safe area in advance, should violent weather occur. Consider basements, a storm cellar, a designated community center, the ground floor of a sturdy structure or a nearby culvert or deep ditch. Fourteen of the 26 people who died in tornadoes on March 1, 1997, in Arkansas were in mobile homes. Abandon both mobile homes and modular buildings during tornado warnings, even if your mobile home is tied down.

Schools

Go to an interior hallway on the lowest floor or other designated tornado shelter area. Avoid gymnasiums and other structures with large, free span roofs. Keep children away from windows, glass doors and outside walls.

Shopping Centers

Go to a designated shelter area, lie flat outside in a ditch or on the lee side of a high-walled embankment...if you know which direction the tornado is moving. A ravine, culvert or under a bridge are possibilities if they are available. Do not stay in your car, due to the danger of airborne debris and broken glass.

Open Country

If there is time and there is a route to drive at right angles away from the tornado's path, you may escape. This option frequently isn't available. Staying in a car in the path of a tornado is too dangerous due to the danger of airborne debris and broken glass. Lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, culvert or under a bridge.

Protect yourself from airborne debris. Most tornado damage is caused by winds of less than 125 miles per hour. However, some tornadoes have winds exceeding 250 miles per hour. Debris projectiles strike you like a bullet at tornado wind velocities.