



# 10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A TORNADO



A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes usually develop in warm, moist air ahead of cold fronts and have been reported in every U.S. state. While they generally occur during spring and summer, they can happen in every season and at any time of the day or night. Although tornadoes can cause a lot of damage, injuries and even death, families can take tornado-specific precautions to help protect children in these situations.

## PREPARE

- 1 Talk about tornadoes.** Spend time with your family discussing why tornadoes occur. Explain that a tornado is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
- 2 Know the signs of a tornado.** Tornadoes can form quickly, striking before an official warning is issued. So watch for tornado danger signs—dark, often greenish clouds; large hail; cloud of debris, funnel cloud; or a roaring noise. Teach these signs to your children, should they have to respond without you.
- 3 Learn about caregivers' disaster plans.** If your children's school or child care center is in an area that could be hit by a tornado, find out how its emergency plan addresses tornados. Ask what its evacuation plans are and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
- 4 Practice tornado drills.** Practice with your family what to do in a tornado. Have everyone go to your safe place. Practicing what to do helps reduce the time it takes to respond in a real emergency.



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## DURING A TORNADO

- 5 Seek shelter.** People in the path of a tornado should find a shelter or a tornado-safe room. The safest place in the home is the interior part of a basement. If possible, get under something sturdy such as a heavy table. If you do not have a basement or storm cellar, consider an interior bathroom, closet, or hallway on the lowest floor. Putting as many walls as you can between you and the outside will provide additional protection.
- 6 If outside, seek cover.** If you are outside, in a vehicle or live in a mobile home and need to take shelter, choose a safe place in a designated shelter or nearby sturdy building. If there is no building nearby, lie flat in a low spot and use your arms and hands to protect your head and neck.
- 7 Wear a helmet for extra protection.** Families should always go to a tornado shelter or safe room first. However, as head injuries are common from tornadoes, wearing a helmet may provide additional protection. The helmets should be easily accessible and are not an alternative to seeking appropriate shelter.

## FOLLOWING A TORNADO

- 8 Stay informed.** After a tornado continue listening to a NOAA weather radio or radio or television station for updates and instructions. Help people who need assistance and beware of dangers such as downed power lines or damaged buildings.
- 9 Involve children in recovery.** After a tornado, include your children in clean-up activities if it is safe to do so. It is comforting to children to watch the household begin to return to normal and to have a job to do.
- 10 Listen to children.** Encourage your child to express feelings of fear. Listen carefully, show understanding, and offer reassurance. Tell your child that the situation is not permanent, and provide physical reassurance through time spent together and displays of affection. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary organizations, or professionals for counseling if extra help is needed.



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## TORNADO WEATHER TERMS

Be familiar with the following definitions to help prepare your family for tornadoes.

- **Tornado WATCH** means that tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. People in a watch area should review their tornado plans (Family Disaster Plan, Disaster Supplies Kit, tornado safe room), and be ready to act if a warning is issued or they suspect a tornado is approaching.
- **Tornado WARNING** means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Tornado warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property. People in a warning area should go immediately to their safe room. If they are in a vehicle, they should get out of the vehicle and go to shelter in a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a low spot away from the vehicle.

Watches and warnings for tornadoes are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) and broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to tornadoes. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next tornado.

### For adults:

- American Red Cross: Tornado Safety: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/tornado>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Tornadoes. <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes/>
- Department of Homeland Security: Tornadoes. <http://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>

### For children

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Tornado. <http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/tornado>

