



## **Tornado Safety: Increase Your Chance of Surviving**

Deaths caused by tornados are tragic reminders that the South is prone to these destructive storms. They can strike any time of day or night and any time of the year.

Many times tornado deaths come at night while the victims are sleeping. These deaths show the importance of being warned when asleep.

The first and most important rule for protecting you and your family is to have a way to be warned as quickly as possible about an approaching tornado.

The best way is to have a NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, pronounced “Noah”) weather radio. NOAA weather radios warn of approaching severe weather by sounding an alarm and then broadcasting details about it.

A NOAA weather radio placed in your bedroom will awaken you as severe weather approaches.

You can buy NOAA weather radios at most electronic stores and even some grocery stores. When you do, choosing one with “SAME” technology will allow you to program it to sound the warning alarm for your area.

It’s best to program it for your county and the surrounding counties. Then it will wake you only for severe weather in your immediate area.

### **Local Media**

Local radio and television stations can notify you of severe weather, too. Make sure that you are listening to a local station. A station in a neighboring county may not broadcast warnings for your location.

The Weather Channel is another way of monitoring severe weather, but only if a local cable company provides it. Satellite subscribers don’t get local warnings.

The major drawback of relying on local radio, TV or cable is that you must be awake and paying attention for possible warnings.

A NOAA weather radio doesn't depend on your being awake or even paying attention. When the National Weather Service broadcasts a warning, it will sound the alarm, alerting you of a dangerous situation.

Outdoor warning sirens aren't a good way to monitor severe weather. Don't depend on them. Outdoor sirens are to warn people working or playing outside of approaching severe weather. They're not to warn people in a building or car or sleeping.

Once the National Weather Service has issued a tornado warning, seek proper shelter quickly.

The general safety rule is to seek shelter in a well-constructed building on the lowest possible floor in an interior room away from windows.

### **Safest Shelter**

The basement is generally the safest place. But even there, stay away from windows and doors and protect yourself from blowing objects.

If you don't have a basement, a small interior room on the first floor is your next-best choice. An interior bathroom often meets these requirements. The plumbing helps to reinforce the bathroom. Another possibility is an interior closet.

In a business, school or church, the same rules apply. Everyone should seek shelter in an interior room away from windows on the lowest level. In many large buildings, interior hallways and restrooms are the best choice.

Places to avoid include large rooms such as gyms, auditoriums, libraries, cafeterias, sanctuaries, naves, etc. These larger rooms generally don't have the structural support to keep from collapsing in a direct hit. Small rooms usually have better structural support than large rooms.

Mobile homes aren't safe during severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Even if it's "tied down," it's not structurally sound enough to withstand a severe thunderstorm's or tornado's winds. The general safety rule for mobile homes is to evacuate to a storm shelter or a sturdy building.

### **Safety Outdoors**

When working outdoors or in a car, keeping up-to-date about changing weather conditions is important. This means listening to a local radio station or having a portable NOAA weather radio.

Don't get under a highway underpass. The myth that this is a good shelter has grown, thanks to a video showing a reporter doing this. That reporter was very lucky.

If you're caught outdoors or in a car with a tornado approaching, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If one isn't available, lie down in a ditch or other local low spot where cars or trees won't be blown on top of you. Don't stay in your car. A tornado can pick up your car and blow it around like a toy.

Regardless of where you seek shelter, protect your body, especially your head and neck, from flying debris. Use pillows, blankets, coats or whatever you can find to protect yourself.

Another common tornado myth is to open the windows to equalize the pressure inside and outside the building. This used to be taught as the correct response. But recent research has shown that it's the wind, not the pressure difference, that destroys buildings. Keeping windows closed improves the building's ability to withstand the wind.

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