

TORNADOS



What Is A Tornado?

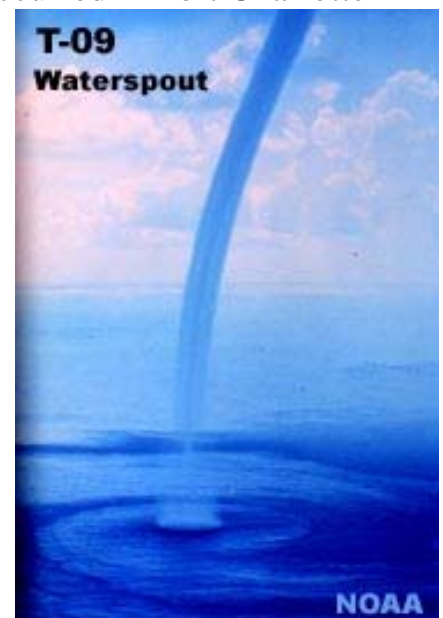
A Tornado is a violent storm with whirling winds of up to 300 miles per hour. It appears as a funnel shaped cloud, from gray to black in color, which extends to the ground from the base of the thunderstorm. A tornado spins like a top and may sound like the roaring of an airplane or locomotive. In Florida, summer tornados generally move at speeds less than 20 MPH and can move in any direction. Winter tornados tend to move at speeds less than 40 MPH and generally move from the southwest to northeast. Their direction of travel can be erratic and may change suddenly. These short-lived storms are the most violent of all atmospheric phenomena and the most destructive, over a small area.

When Can A Tornado Occur?

Most tornados in Florida are likely to occur between 3 PM to 8 PM during the months of June, July, and August; however, they can occur at any time, often with little or no warning. Fewer tornados occur in the winter and spring. Most tornados in Florida are considered weak with winds of 50 to 100 MPH. However, if a tornado occurs in the colder part of the year it tends to be stronger than those in the summer. In February of 1998, a series of violent tornados caused devastation in Kissimmee, FL. Forty-two people were killed and 260 were injured. Last year, a strong summer tornado with wind speeds over 110 MPH occurred in Port Charlotte and injured 3 people and caused \$500K in property damage. Tornados, which form over the Gulf, are called waterspouts. Tornados often form in the northeast quadrant of hurricanes that move in from the Gulf of Mexico.

Tornado Watch or Tornado Warning?

The National Weather Service broadcasts severe weather conditions over the emergency alerting system as well as NOAA Weather Radio (click here for the [NOAA Weather Radio channel](#) in your area). When they post a tornado



watch they want the public to know that conditions are right for a tornado. When a tornado warning is posted for a given area, a tornado has been sighted or has been detected on radar. The warning will include those cities in the path of the storm.

In general, a watch means, “Caution, Watch the Sky” and a warning means “Danger, Take Cover”.

WHAT PROTECTIVE ACTIONS SHOULD I TAKE FOR TORNADOS?

For Tornado Watches:

When conditions are right for a tornado, there are a few things, listed below, you should do:

1. Stay tuned to a local weather station or listen to your [NOAA Weather Radio](#).
2. Secure any loose objects outdoors, or move them inside.
3. Survey local structures for the most suitable shelter.
4. Keep watching the sky to the south and southwest. If you see any funnel shaped clouds, report them immediately to the nearest law enforcement agency and take cover.

For Tornado Warnings:

This means a tornado has been spotted near your area or is predicted to come your way. **TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY!!** Do not leave shelter until you are sure no further danger exists. Remember, there is no guaranteed safe place during a tornado. Here are some examples of places you may be in:

1. **In a Motor Vehicle:** The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Never try to outrun a tornado in your car. Stop your vehicle and get out. Seek shelter elsewhere. Do not get under or next to your vehicle. A ditch or ground depression will help, if a tornado shelter is not nearby.



2. **At School:** Follow the school disaster plan. Stay away from auditoriums, gymnasiums, and other areas with wide, free-span roofs. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.
3. **Open Country:** Move away from the tornado's projected path at right angles. Seek shelter in a ditch, ravine, or culvert. Even a low spot in the ground will give you some protection. Stay away from trees and remember to protect your head.

4. **In a Home or Condo:** The best place to go is the innermost hallway on the lowest floor. An interior closet is relatively safe. An interior bathroom is even better.



The walls are close together and the bathtub, sink, and toilet help support debris in case the house collapses. **AVOID WINDOWS.** Since flying debris does most of the killing, the worst kind of flying debris is broken glass.

5. **DO NOT open "any windows"** when a tornado approaches to equalize pressure. If a tornado actually gets close enough for the pressure drop to be experienced, the strong winds have probably already caused the most significant damage. Opening windows, in fact, may actually increase damage.
6. **In a Mobile or Manufactured Home:** These homes are easy to damage by flying debris and are one of the least desirable places to be during a tornado. If a tornado approaches, seek other shelter immediately. Go to a tornado shelter on foot, if possible. Do not drive your car. Do not get under your mobile home. If no other shelter is available, lie down in a ditch or a ground depression.