

Tornadoes

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 a thunderstorm. A tornado spins like a top and may sound like the roaring of an airplane or a locomotive. Tornadoes move at an average speed of 30 mph and generally move from the southwest to the northeast. Their direction can be erratic and change suddenly.

Most tornadoes are likely to occur during the mid-afternoon and evening hours during the months of April, May, and June. However, they have been sighted and caused damage during other months. Fortunately, we in Southwest Florida are not subject to many of the larger type tornadoes that are seen in the Midwest. Most of our tornadoes are small and short-lived. However, they still can cause damage, injuries, and fatalities.

You should be familiar with the following terms:

Tornado watch: Conditions are favorable for the formation of tornadoes. Be aware of changing weather conditions.

Tornado warning: A tornado has been sighted in your area. Take shelter immediately.

Tornado: A violent, whirling, funnel-shaped cloud that touches the ground.

Funnel Cloud: A violent, whirling, funnel-shaped cloud that does not touch the ground. Many people mistakenly call these tornadoes.

Waterspout: A tornado over water.

Tornado Preparedness Tips:

For Tornado Watches:

1. Stay tuned to local radio or 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. If you see any funnel shaped clouds. Report them immediately to the nearest law enforcement agency or emergency management.

For Tornado Warnings:

Take shelter immediately!

1. In a Motor Vehicle: This is the least desirable place to be. Do not try an outrun the funnel cloud or tornado. Do not get under or next to you vehicle. Try to find indoor shelter immediately. If all else fails, try to find a ditch or depression to get in.
2. At School: Follow the school disaster plan. Stay away from gyms and auditoriums. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.

3. Open Country: Move away from the tornado at a right angle. Seek shelter in a ravine, ditch, or culvert. A low spot in the ground will give you some protection.

4. At Home: Stay away from windows. Move into an area with no windows such as a bathroom or a closet. The bathroom is the safest due to the fact that the plumbing gives extra support to the walls. Also, your bathtub may be able to provide you with some protection.

5. In a Mobile Home: This another one of the least desirable place to be. Seek other shelter immediately. Go to another shelter on foot, if possible. Do not get under your mobile home. Lie in a ditch or other ground depression if all else fails.