

## Are You ready? Tornado season is here!

Each year about a thousand tornadoes touch-down in the US. You can greatly reduce the chance of injury by doing a few simple things.

One of the most important things you can do to prevent being injured in a tornado is to be **ALERT** to the onset of severe weather. Most deaths and injuries happen to people who are unaware and uninformed. Young children or the mentally challenged may not recognize a dangerous situation. The ill, elderly, or invalid may not be able to reach shelter in time. Those who ignore the weather because of indifference or overconfidence may not perceive the danger. Stay aware, and you will stay alive!

If a tornado "**watch**" is issued for your area, it means that a tornado is "possible."

If a tornado "**warning**" is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been spotted, or is strongly indicated on radar, and it is time to go to a safe shelter immediately.

Be alert to what is happening outside as well. Here are some of the things that people describe when they tell about a tornado experience:

- A sickly greenish or greenish black color to the sky.
- If there is a watch or warning posted, then the fall of hail should be considered as a real danger sign. Hail can be common in some areas, however, and usually has no tornadic activity along with it.
- A strange quiet that occurs within or shortly after the thunderstorm.
- Clouds moving by very fast, especially in a rotating pattern or converging toward one area of the sky.
- A sound a little like a waterfall or rushing air at first, but turning into a roar as it comes closer. The sound of a tornado has been likened to that of both railroad trains and jets.
- Debris dropping from the sky.
- An obvious "funnel-shaped" cloud that is rotating, or debris such as branches or leaves being pulled upwards, even if no funnel cloud is visible.

If you see a tornado and it is not moving to the right or to the left relative to trees or power poles in the distance, it may be moving towards you! Remember that although tornadoes usually move from southwest to northeast, they also move towards the east, the southeast, the north, and even northwest.

Encourage your family members to plan for their own safety in many different locations. It is important to make decisions about the safest places well **BEFORE** you ever have to go to them.

- In a basement, away from the west and south walls. Hiding under a heavy work-table or under the stairs will protect the family from crumbling walls, chimneys, and large airborne debris falling into the cellar. Old blankets, quilts and an unused mattress will protect against flying debris, but they should be stored in the shelter area. Precious time can be lost by trying to find these items at the last minute.
- In a small, windowless, first floor, interior room like a closet or bathroom. The bathtub and toilet are anchored directly into the ground, and sometimes are the only thing left in place after the tornado. Getting into the bathtub with a couch cushion over you gives you protection on all sides, as well as an extra anchor to the foundation. Plumbing pipes may or may not help hold the walls together, but all the extra framing that it takes to put a bathroom together may make a big difference. If there is no downstairs bathroom and the closets are all packed with "stuff," a hall may be the best shelter. Put as many walls as you can between yourself and the tornado. In a pinch, put a metal trash can/lid over as much of you as you can. It will keep some flying debris from injuring you. Even that may make the difference between life and death.

Wherever it is, the shelter should be well known by each member of the family. If you and your family will conduct annual emergency drills (fire, tornado, etc), everyone will remember what to do and where to go when a tornado is approaching--automatically and without panic. Choose a friend or family member in another part of town or

elsewhere to be a "contact person" that will be called by everyone should the family members become separated.

The [Nappanee](#) EMS suggests that you assemble a "disaster supplies kit" that you keep in your shelter area. It should contain:

- A first aid kit with essential medication in addition to the usual items.
- A battery powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Canned and other non-perishable food and a hand operated can opener.
- Bottled water.
- Sturdy shoes and work gloves.
- Written instructions on how to turn off your homes utilities.
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- If you are in a car, and you can see a tornado forming or approaching, you should leave the car and take shelter. You may think you can escape from the tornado by driving away from it, but you can't know what you may be driving into! A tornado can blow a car off a road, pick a car up and hurl it, or tumble a car over and over. Many people have been killed in cars while they were trying to outrun the tornado, and although it is sometimes possible to escape, it is generally not a good idea. An underpass may seem like a safe place, but may not be. While videos show people surviving under an underpass, those tornadoes have been weak. No one knows how survivable an underpass is in a strong or violent tornado. The debris flying under the underpass could be very deadly... head for a ditch.
- Interior rooms and halls are the best locations in large buildings. Central stairwells are good, but elevators are not. If the building loses power, you may be in the elevator for a long time. Stay away from glass walls and windows, no matter how small.
- Most tornado deaths occur in cars and mobile homes. If you live in the mobile home park, you should find out where the nearest shelter is located.
- Out shopping? Go to interior rooms and halls on the lowest floor. Stay away from glass enclosed places or areas with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, theaters, and warehouses. Crouch down and cover your head. Deaths have occurred in large, single story department stores. They have occurred inside the building when the roof or wide span brick walls, which collapsed. A corner would be safer than the middle of the wall. A bathroom, closet, office, or maintenance room with short walls would be the safest area, especially if it was on the north or east side of the building.

Nappanee was blessed not to have had any fatalities during the 2007 tornado that came thru southeast of town. Shelters are up and running in several areas of the city for those without shelter, they are located at:

- Lutheran Church on South Main Street
- North Main Mennonite Church on North Main Street
- Nappanee United Methodist Church on East Market Street
- Nappanee Church of the Brethren on Mack Drive
- First Mennonite Church on West Market Street
- Living Gospel Church at 302 West Walnut Street (Handicap Access)

The Police, Fire and EMS departments **do not** provide a shelter, there is a lot of traffic in those areas due to emergency personnel coming to and from the departments for weather watch and preparation for a possible touch-down.

**Remember stay alert, stay safe, stay alive!**