



Tornadoes

[The Hazard Weather Level For the Next 3 Days is](#)

Tornado Season

Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year. In the southern states, peak tornado occurrence is in April through June, while peak months in the northern states are during the summer. Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 and 9 p.m. but have been known to occur at all hours of the day or night.

Watches versus Warnings

Many people confuse the meaning of a tornado "watch" and tornado "warning" issued by the National Weather Service. Here's the difference:

- **Watch:** Tornadoes are possible in your area; remain alert for approaching storms.
- **Warning:** A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area and the sky becomes threatening, move to your pre-designated place of safety.

Enhanced Fujita Scale (EF Scale)

A common misnomer regarding the Fujita scale is that many people confuse it to be a measurement of size of a tornado when in actuality it is the amount of destruction caused by the tornado.

The [EF-scale](#) is a set of wind estimates (not measurements) based on damage. The Enhanced Fujita (EF) tornado damage scale takes into account things like damage to a sided house compared to a brick house or to a three-story building vs. a shopping mall.

Tornado Warnings

Tornado Warnings are issued by the National Weather Service when a tornado has been sighted by an officially trained weather spotter or is indicated by radar. Tornado Warnings are broadcast by local media and by [NOAA weather alert radio](#).

Outdoor Warning Devices (Sirens) operated by Fayette County Emergency Management are located in strategic locations throughout Fayette County. When a tornado warning is issued for any portion of the county, Fayette County Emergency Communications (911 Dispatch) will activate the sirens. Once activated all sirens within Fayette County except those individually controlled by outlying cities will sound. This means if a tornado warning is issued for the eastern half of Fayette County, all sirens will be activated including those in west Fayette County. **DO NOT CALL 911 when you hear a Outdoor Warning Siren.** Instead, first tune into local media for news and weather reports. If, after doing so, you believe the siren activation is a malfunction contact Emergency Management at 319-440-3351.



A word about Outdoor Warning Devices (Sirens)...

Outdoor Warning Devices (Sirens) are designed to be an early warning device primarily for persons who are outside away from the television and/or radio. The sirens are not frequently heard in homes during Spring and Summer Months for multiple reasons such as the distance from the siren, homes being shut up with air conditioners running and people being asleep during nighttime storms with thunder, rain and wind. For this reason

Emergency Management officials highly recommend citizens keep a NOAA weather alert radio in their homes, preferable in the bedroom, with a tone alert.

Safety & Preparedness

It is important to remain alert to signs of an approaching tornado and seek shelter if threatening conditions exist. Look for environmental clues including a dark sky, large hail or a loud roar. If a warning is issued, move to a pre-designated shelter such as a basement; stay away from windows. You can prepare for the possibility of a tornado by learning the safest places to seek shelter at home, work, school, or outdoors and while traveling.

In homes and small buildings:

Move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement. If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture. Stay away from windows and outside walls.

In schools, nursing homes, hospitals, factories, motels and shopping centers:

Move to pre-designated shelter areas. Interior hallways and rooms on the lowest floor are usually best. Avoid areas with wide, free-span roofs. Stay away from windows and outside walls.

Mobile Homes:

Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer no protection from tornadoes and should be abandoned.

Outdoors:

Seek shelter in a sturdy, well-constructed building.

While Traveling: DO NOT TAKE SHELTER UNDER OVERPASSES

A dangerous trend has emerged in recent years among people in the path of approaching tornadoes while traveling in a car. Many of those in the path of a tornado are abandoning cars and seeking shelter under highway overpasses, apparently believing this will increase their safety from the storm. The idea that overpasses offer increased safety probably received an additional boost in 1991, when a television news crew rode out a weak tornado under an overpass along the Kansas Turnpike. The resulting video was seen by millions, and appears to have fostered the idea that overpasses are preferred sources of shelter, and should be sought out by those in the path of a tornado.

In the Oklahoma City area on May 3rd, 1999, at least one person was killed by a violent tornado while seeking shelter under an overpass. Eyewitness accounts from others in the area indicated that roads were blocked at times as people stopped cars to run up into the small crevices under an overpass. Not only is the overpass unsafe as a shelter, blocking roads denies others the chance to get out of the storm's path!

In reality, an overpass in the direct path of a tornado is a dangerous place to be. Airborne debris can easily be blown into and under the overpass where people might try to seek shelter. In the 1991 Kansas Turnpike video, the tornado was relatively weak when it passed near the overpass. A stronger tornado striking the overpass directly would likely have caused serious injury to those attempting to find shelter there.

The safest course of action when a tornado approaches is to get out of the tornado's path by driving at a right angle away from the tornado, or to seek shelter in a sturdy, well-constructed building. Overpasses offer no protection from a direct hit from a tornado, and should not be used as shelter. If there is no time and no nearby shelter lie flat in a ditch or depression and use your hands to protect your head.

After, the storm has passed...

Check for injured or trapped persons. Give first aid when appropriate. Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help. Turn on radio or television to get the latest emergency information. Use the telephone only for emergency calls.



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