

# TORNADOES

## Know the Terms

### Tornado Watch

Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, commercial radio, or local television for information.

### Tornado Warning

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.

## Tornado Facts

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms. Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, tornadoes can cause fatalities and devastate a neighborhood in seconds. A tornado appears as a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground with whirling winds that can reach 300 miles per hour. Damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long. Every state is at some risk from this hazard. Some tornadoes are clearly visible, while rain or nearby low-hanging clouds obscure others. Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that little, if any, advance warning is possible.

Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still. A cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible. Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

The following are facts about tornadoes:

- Wisconsin averages 21 tornadoes a year.
- The peak tornado season in Wisconsin is April to August, but tornadoes can occur any time of year.
- Tornadoes can occur any time during the day or night, but are most frequent between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.
- About 80% of tornadoes that hit Wisconsin are relatively weak, with winds under 100 mph. Only 1% are violent with winds over 200 mph.
- They may strike quickly, with little or no warning.
- They may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel.



- The average tornado moves southwest to northeast, but tornadoes have been known to move in any direction. The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 MPH, but may vary from stationary to 70 MPH.

## What to do Before a Tornado

Be alert to changing weather conditions.

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards or to commercial radio or local television newscasts for the latest information.
- Look for approaching storms
- Look for the following danger signs:
  - Dark, often greenish sky
  - Large hail
  - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
  - Loud roar, similar to a freight train.



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If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately

<i>If you are:</i>	<i>Then:</i>
Inside a building without a basement	Move to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy table. Put as many walls as possible between you and the storm. Stay away from windows.
Inside a mobile home or trailer	Leave and go to the designated storm shelter or the lowest floor or a sturdy building.
In a forest	Seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees.
In an open area	Go to a low place such as a ravine or valley. Be alert for flash floods.
On open water	Get to land and find shelter immediately.
Anywhere you feel your hair stand on end (which indicates that lightning is about to strike)	Squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Place your hands over your ears and your head between your knees. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. <b>DO NOT</b> lie flat on the ground.

For more information on emergency preparedness, please visit our website at [ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov](http://ReadyWisconsin.wi.gov).

You'll find guidance on:

- Getting a Kit — of emergency supplies for your home, car and workplace.
- Making a Plan — to communicate with and locate your loved ones during an emergency.
- Being Informed — about the types of emergencies that occur and the safety measures you should take.

You can also get additional information from your county emergency management director.



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