

# Watch vs. Warning: What to Know Before Severe Storms

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**PHILADELPHIA-** Spring time can often bring tumultuous storms like parts of the region saw this past weekend. Two tornadoes have been confirmed by the [National Weather Service](#) (NWS) in Delaware and Pennsylvania. NWS often issues watches and warnings to alert residents of severe weather and when to seek shelter. So, what is the difference and how should you prepare?

## Severe Thunderstorm Watch vs. Warning:

The NWS issues a **Severe Thunderstorm Watch** when the atmosphere is favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for information.

The NWS issues a **Severe Thunderstorm Warning** when severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property to those in the path of the storm.

## Tornado Watch vs. Warning:

The NWS issues a **Tornado Watch** when weather conditions in an area indicate an increased risk for severe weather that may be capable of producing a tornado.

The NWS issues a **Tornado Warning** when a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. A warning means you should take shelter immediately.

## Prepare Before the Storm Hits:

During severe weather, remain alert, keep your cell phone charged and take steps to prepare now to potentially save lives and protect property when severe weather strikes.



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- Have several ways to receive alerts. Download the [FEMA App](#) (available in English and Spanish) to receive real-time emergency alerts from the National Weather Service and find a nearby shelter.
- Pay attention to local warnings and follow the safety guidance of your local officials.
- Make sure your [emergency kit](#) is stocked and includes non-perishable food, cash, charging devices, a flashlight and batteries in case of power outages.
- Consider special needs you and your household members might have. Older adults and people with disabilities may need extra assistance to prepare for the storm. Visit [Ready.gov/older-adults](#) and [Individuals with Disabilities](#) to get more tips and information.
- Don't forget the needs of your pets. Many shelters do not take household pets, so remember to create a plan and have supplies available for your animals.
- Check on your neighbors. As you prepare your family and loved ones for a disaster, check on neighbors in your community to see if they are doing the same or if they might need help to get started.
- Prepare your property for dangerous weather by clearing out any large or loose materials. Remove dead trees, hanging branches and loose objects in your yard or patio that could be dangerous during severe winds.
- Create an emergency plan with your family. Use the new "[Make a Plan](#)" form to get started. You can easily save an electronic copy or share it with other family members.

To schedule an interview, reach out to the FEMA Region 3 News Desk:  
[femar3newsdesk@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:femar3newsdesk@fema.dhs.gov)

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*FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters. FEMA Region 3's jurisdiction includes Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia.*

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