

Tornadoes Can Touch Down at Any Time; Being Prepared is Vital

Release Date: Me 17, 2023

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The deadly tornadoes that marched across Middle Tennessee earlier this year are a reminder that these violently rotating columns of air can touch down any place, at any time. Preparing for them is vital to keeping your family safe.

Tennessee sees a disproportionately high number of twisters each year compared to other parts of the United States. In 2021, Middle Tennessee saw 46 of the 67 tornadoes that struck the state. Historically, the most tornadoes occur between March and May and again between mid-October and November.

The Enhanced Fujita Scale, or EF Scale, is used to assign a tornado a “rating” based on estimated wind speeds and related damage. An EF-0 tornado has an estimated 65 to 85 mph winds. Wind estimates of an EF-5 tornado are over 200 mph.

If the National Weather Service issues a **tornado watch**, it means *be prepared*. Hail and damaging wind threats are expected and multiple tornadoes could spin up. **Tornado warnings**, usually issued for an hour or less, mean *take cover*. Sustained winds could equal or exceed 58 mph, which the National Weather Service says could cause loose objects to become dangerous projectiles and could also uproot diseased trees.

But that’s no reason to let weather predictions leave you feeling stressed. It’s also a good reason to be prepared year-round.

Know your area’s tornado risk, know the signs that conditions are right for a tornado, and practice your emergency plan for your family and pets. In other words, know whether to shelter in place or go to your identified safe place, which could mean leaving town or deciding to stay with friends or family.



Before a tornado touches down, it's a good idea to invest in a NOAA Weather Radio. A public service offered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, weather information is broadcast directly and continuously from the nearest National Weather Service office.

Some communities use the Emergency Alert System, a national public warning system, to deliver warnings of imminent threats to specific areas. A severe weather threat such as a tornado warning can be sent by state and local public safety officials. If your community has sirens, become familiar with the warning tone.

If you don't have a safe room you can access in an emergency, the next best protection is a small, interior, windowless room or basement on the lowest level of your home, or the windowless room of a sturdy building. Prepare for your emergency stay by packing supplies you need. Click [Build A Kit | Ready.gov](#) for an emergency supply list.

Once inside your safe place, protect yourself by covering your head and neck with your arms or a helmet and cocooning yourself with blankets. If you are in a car or outdoors and cannot get to a building, do not try to outrun the twister. Take the same precautions: Cover your head.

Simply put, preparing for severe weather means knowing what to do.

For the latest information on Tennessee's recovery from the severe storms, straight-line winds and tornadoes, visit [FEMA.gov/Disaster/4701](https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4701). You may also follow [TN.gov/TEMA](https://www.tn.gov/TEMA); [Twitter.com/TEMA](https://twitter.com/TEMA), [Facebook.com/TNDisasterInfo](https://www.facebook.com/TNDisasterInfo), [@FEMARegion4/Twitter](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion4) and [Facebook.com/FEMA](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA).

