

Kent County Health Department Tornado Fact Sheet



Tornadoes usually, but not always, come with severe thunderstorms. A tornado **watch** means a tornado is possible in the area. A tornado **warning** means the weather radar has indicated a tornado or a tornado has been sighted and may be headed for the area. Some signs that may mean a tornado is coming are:

- a dark or green-colored sky
- a large, dark, low-lying cloud
- large hail
- a loud roar that sounds like a freight train
- an approaching cloud of debris

With winds swirling up to 200 miles an hour, a tornado can destroy just about everything in its path.

Prepare a Home Tornado Plan

- Choose a place where family members can gather if a tornado is spotted in your area and make sure everyone knows where that spot is.
- Assemble a disaster supply kit. Have water, non-perishable food items, a first aid kit, a flashlight, radio and spare batteries stored in a bag or sturdy container that you can quickly grab in case of a tornado. If the power goes out, you'll have some of the essentials that will make the first few hours more comfortable.
- Have family tornado drills so everyone, especially young children, know what to do if a tornado is coming.
- Have a family communication plan in the event family members get separated. Choose a contact person that everyone can call to check in.

Be sure everyone has the name and phone number of the contact person.

Safety Rules for Tornadoes

- **Go to the basement or storm cellar.** If that's not possible, go to an inside room (bathroom or closet) or an inner hallway. Avoid windows! An exploding window can injure or kill.
- **Go to the center of the room.** The corners tend to attract debris.
- **Get under a piece of heavy furniture** (workbench, heavy table or desk) and hold on to it. Use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- **If you are outside, get to an enclosed building right away.** If that is not possible, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- **Never try to outrun a tornado in a car or truck.** Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift up a car or truck and toss it through the air. Leave your car and head for a safe place.

Mobile homes are particularly vulnerable. A mobile home can overturn very easily even if precautions have been taken to tie down the unit. When a tornado warning is issued, take shelter in a building with a strong foundation. If shelter is unavailable, lie in a ditch or low-lying area a safe distance away from the unit.

Fujita Tornado Intensity Scale

The Fujita Scale is used to rate the intensity of a tornado by examining the damage caused by the tornado after it has passed

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over a human-made structure.

Category F0: Gale tornado (40-72 mph); light damage. Some damage to chimneys; break branches off trees; push over shallow-rooted trees; damage to sign boards.

Category F1: Moderate tornado (73-112 mph); moderate damage. The lower limit is the beginning of hurricane wind speed; peel surface off roofs; mobile homes pushed off foundations or overturned; moving autos pushed off the roads.

Category F2: Significant tornado (113-157 mph); considerable damage. Roofs torn off frame houses; mobile homes demolished; boxcars pushed over; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated.

Category F3: Severe tornado (158-206 mph); Severe damage. Roofs and some walls torn off well-constructed houses; trains overturned; most trees in forest uprooted; heavy cars lifted off ground and thrown.

Category F4: Devastating tornado (207-260 mph); Devastating damage. Well-constructed houses leveled; structure with weak foundation blown off some distance; cars thrown and large missiles generated.

Category F5: Incredible tornado (261-318 mph); Incredible damage. Strong frame houses lifted off foundations and carried considerable distance to disintegrate; automobile sized missiles fly through the air in excess of 100 yards; trees debarked; incredible phenomena will occur.

Additional Resources

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
www.outlook.noaa.gov/tornadoes/
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) www.fema.gov
- American Red Cross
www.redcross.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.bt.cdc.gov