

Seeking Shelter During Severe Weather

The average lead time for a severe thunderstorm warning can be upwards of 30 minutes. However, in our area where tornadoes can occur quickly with little to no warning, lead times for tornado warnings average closer to 10 minutes. *Having a sheltering plan and access to weather information is important – it saves time when minutes matter!*

Homes

- If your home has a basement that you can safely access, seek shelter within an interior portion of it (preferably a small room) away from windows.
- For homes without a basement, shelter within an interior room, without windows, on the lowest floor. For most, this may be a center hallway, bathroom, or closet.
- For multi-level homes, avoid sheltering where there are heavy objects (such as large appliances and furniture) on the floor directly above you.
- If possible, shelter under a sturdy piece of furniture like a heavy table or workbench. Cover yourself with a blanket, sleeping bag, or small mattress – taking special care to protect your head. It may be beneficial to also keep a spare helmet in/near your sheltering location.
- Ensure that your shelter location is away from windows, which can shatter and send broken glass plus other debris flying through the home. A shelter location with a door or wall that forms a protective barrier from a window is ideal.

Mobile Homes

- If in a mobile home, have an evacuation plan and a quickly accessible alternative shelter location identified.
- Do not stay in a mobile home during a tornado; mobile homes are easily overturned during strong winds.
- Identify a nearby shelter location (like a neighbor's home, business, or community building) that you could easily access. This may require speaking to the building's owner or manager ahead of time to ensure access.
- If there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert in an open area and shield your head.

Workplace/School

- Some facilities may have sheltering plans for severe weather and tornadoes. Quickly and calmly follow the instruction provided by managing staff or employees for that building.
- Avoid windows and large, open rooms such as cafeterias, gyms, or auditoriums.
- If there is no shelter plan, seek out small interior rooms on the lowest accessible level, away from windows and large, open spaces.

Large Stores/Malls/Theatres/Gyms/Churches

- Long-span buildings like malls, large stores, theaters, gyms, and churches are vulnerable to roof collapse due to structural support primarily from exterior walls.
- Some facilities have sheltering plans for severe weather and tornadoes. Quickly and calmly follow the instruction provided by managing staff or employees for that building.
- Seek out small interior rooms on the lowest accessible level of the building (commonly bathrooms, breakrooms, or closets) away from windows. Avoid large, open spaces.
- If an interior room is unavailable, shelter near or under secured furniture which can offer protection (counters, heavy shelving, seats, benches, heavy tables, etc.) and protect your head.

Vehicles

- Vehicles can be easily overturned by strong winds and tornadoes. Additionally, vehicles offer little protection from flying debris.
- Do not try to outdrive a tornado. If there is a sturdy building nearby (gas station, store, community building, etc.), drive to it, park, and go inside immediately.
- If there is no sturdy building nearby, either park in an open area away from trees/powerlines, get low within your vehicle, and cover your head/neck OR leave your vehicle and seek shelter in a low-lying area like a ditch, ravine, or culvert and protect your head.
- Do NOT seek shelter under a highway overpass or bridge. These areas are particularly dangerous because of how the wind becomes funneled through a smaller area.

Outdoors

- Do not try to outrun a tornado. If there is a sturdy building nearby (gas station, store, community building, etc.), run to it and go inside immediately.
- If there is no sturdy building nearby, seek shelter in an open, low-lying area (like a ditch, ravine, or culvert) away from trees/powerlines and protect your head.
- Do NOT seek shelter under a highway overpass or bridge. These areas are particularly dangerous because of how the wind becomes funneled through a smaller area.

Limited Mobility

- If able, move yourself or have a caregiver move you to an interior room or hallway away from windows and protect your head and neck. Thicker blankets and pillows can be used to help protect you from falling/flying debris.
- If you are unable to move yourself and assistance is not available, cover yourself with thick blankets and pillows, taking extra care to protect your head and neck.

Ideal Shelter: Interior room, lowest level, and away from windows!

Source: www.cdc.gov/disasters/tornadoes/during