

Tornadoes

Stay Tuned for Storm Watches and Warnings

When there are thunderstorms in your area, turn on your radio or TV to get the latest emergency information from local authorities. Listen for announcements of a tornado watch or tornado warning.

Local Warning System

Learn about the tornado warning system of your county or locality. Most tornado-prone areas have a siren system. Know how to distinguish between the siren's warnings for a tornado watch and a tornado warning.

A *tornado watch* is issued when weather conditions favor the formation of tornadoes, for example, during a severe thunderstorm.

During a tornado watch,

- Stay tuned to local radio and TV stations or a National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio for further weather information.
- Watch the weather and be prepared to take shelter immediately if conditions worsen.
- A *tornado warning* is issued when a tornado funnel is sighted or indicated by weather radar. You should take shelter immediately.

Thunderstorms

Because tornadoes often accompany thunderstorms, pay close attention to changing weather conditions when there is a severe thunderstorm watch or warning.

A *severe thunderstorm watch* means severe thunderstorms are possible in your area.

A *severe thunderstorm warning* means severe thunderstorms are occurring in your area.

Keep fresh batteries and a battery-powered radio or TV on hand. Electrical power is often interrupted during thunderstorms--just when information about weather warnings is most needed.

Important Measures To Take

- Take a few minutes with your family to develop a tornado emergency plan. Sketch a floor plan of where you live, or walk through each room and discuss where and how to seek shelter.
- Show a second way to exit from each room or area. If you need special equipment, such as a rope ladder, mark where it is located.
- Make sure everyone understands the siren warning system, if there's such a system in your area.
- Mark where your first-aid kit and fire extinguishers are located.
- Mark where the utility switches or valves are located so they can be turned off--if time permits--in an emergency.
- Teach your family how to administer basic first aid, how to use a fire extinguisher, and how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity in your home.
- Learn the emergency dismissal policy for your child's school.
- Make sure your children know--
 - What a tornado is
 - What tornado watches and warnings are
 - What county or parish they live in (warnings are issued by county or parish)
 - How to take shelter, whether at home or at school.

Extra Measures for People with Special Needs

- Write down your specific needs, limitations, capabilities, and medications. Keep this list near you always--perhaps in your purse or wallet.
- Find someone nearby (a spouse, roommate, friend, neighbor, relative, or co-worker) who will agree to assist you in case of an emergency. Give him or her a copy of your list. You may also want to provide a spare key to your home, or directions to find a key.
- Keep aware of weather conditions through whatever means are accessible to you. Some options are closed captioning or scrolled warnings on TV, radio bulletins, or call-in weather information lines.

Practicing Your Emergency Plan

Conduct drills and ask questions to make sure your family remembers information on tornado safety, particularly how to recognize hazardous weather conditions and how to take shelter.

Writing Down Important Information

A blank form is provided for you to write down important names and numbers.

Make a list of important information. Include these on your list:

- Important telephone numbers, such as emergency (police and fire), paramedics, and medical centers.
- Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your insurance agents, including policy types and numbers.
- Telephone numbers of the electric, gas, and water companies.
- Names and telephone numbers of neighbors.
- Name and telephone number of your landlord or property manager.
- Important medical information (for example, allergies, regular medications, and brief medical history).
- Year, model, license, and identification numbers of your vehicles (automobiles, boats, and RVs).
- Bank's or credit union's telephone number, and your account numbers.
- Radio and television broadcast stations to tune to for emergency broadcast information.

Storing Important Documents

Store the following documents in a fire- and water-proof safe:

- Birth certificates
- Ownership certificates (autos, boats, etc.)
- Social security cards
- Insurance policies
- Will
- Household inventory
 - List of contents of household, include serial numbers, if applicable
 - Photographs or videotape of contents of every room
 - Photographs of items of high values, such as jewelry, paintings, collection items

First Aid Kit

Store your first aid supplies in a tool box or fishing tackle box so they will be easy to carry and be protected from water. Inspect your kit regularly and keep it freshly stocked.

Drugs and Medications

- Hydrogen peroxide to wash and disinfect wounds
- Antibiotic ointment
- Individually wrapped alcohol swabs
- Aspirin and non-aspirin tablets
- Prescriptions and any long-term medications (keep these current)
- Diarrhea medicine
- Eye drops

NOTE: Important medical information and most prescriptions can be stored in the refrigerator, which gives excellent protection from fires.

Dressings

- Band-aids
- Clean sheets torn into strips
- Elastic bandages
- Rolled gauze
- Cotton-tipped swabs
- Adhesive tape roll Other First Aid Supplies
- First aid book
- Writing materials
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Thermometer
- Bar soap
- Tissues
- Sunscreen
- Paper cups
- Plastic bags
- Safety pins
- Needle and thread
- Instant cold packs for strains
- Sanitary napkins
- Pocket knife
- Saline eye material

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- Tweezers
- Thermometer
- Bar soap
- Tissues
- Sunscreen
- Paper cups
- Plastic bags
- Safety pins
- Needle and thread
- Instant cold packs for sprains
- Sanitary napkins
- Pocket knife
- Splinting material

Reducing Household Hazards

Home Inspection Checklist

The following suggestions will reduce the risk for injury during or after a tornado. No amount of preparation will eliminate every risk. Possible Hazards Inspect your home for possible hazards, including the following:

- Are walls securely bolted to the foundation?
- Are wall studs attached to the roof rafters with metal hurricane clips, not nails? Utilities?
- Do you know where and how to shut off utilities at the main switches or valves? Home Contents?
- Are chairs or beds near windows, mirrors, or large pictures?
- Are heavy items stored on shelves more than 30" high?
- Are there large, unsecured items that might topple over or fall?
- Are poisons, solvents, or toxic materials stored safely?

Securing Your Home's Structure

No home is completely safe in a tornado. However, attention to construction details can reduce damage and provide better protection for you and your family.

if a tornado should strike your house. If an inspection using the "Home Inspection Checklist" reveals a possible hazard in the way your home is constructed, contact your local city or county building inspectors for more information about structural safety. They may also offer suggestions on finding a qualified contractor to do any needed work for you.

Walls and Roof Rafters

Strengthen the areas of connection between the wall studs and roof rafters with hurricane clips as shown in the e graphic.

Shutting Off Utilities

Gas

After a tornado, DO NOT USE matches, lighters, or appliances, or operate light switches until you are sure e are no gas leaks. Sparks from electrical switches could ignite gas and cause an explosion. If you smell the odor of gas or if you notice a large consumption of gas being registered on the gas meter, shut off the gas immediately. First, find the main shut-off valve located on a pipe next to the gas meter. Use an ad- able wrench to turn the valve to the "off" position.

Electricity

After a major disaster, shut off the electricity. Sparks from electrical switches could ignite leaking gas and cause an explosion.

Water

- Water may be turned off at either of two locations:
 - a) At the main meter, which controls the water flow to the entire property
 - b) At the water main leading into the home. If you may need an emergency source of fresh water, it is better to shut off your water here, because it will conserve the water in your water heater.Watch your valve carefully to the water line. If this is an above ground water line, it may be possible to shut off the water.

- o Label the water mains for quick identification.

Arranging and Securing Household Items

- Arrange furniture so that chairs and beds are away from windows, mirrors, and picture frames.
- Place heavy or large items on lower shelves.
- Secure your large appliances, especially your water heater, with flexible cable, braided wire, or metal strapping.
- Identify top-heavy, free-standing furniture, such as bookcases and china cabinets, that could topple over.
- Secure your furniture by using one of two methods.
 - o "L" brackets, corner brackets, or aluminum molding, to attach tall or top-heavy furniture to the wall.
 - o Eyebolts, to secure items located a short distance from the wall.
- Install sliding bolts or childproof latches on all cabinet doors.
- Store all hazardous materials such as poisons and solvents--
 - o in a sturdy, latched or locked cabinet
 - o in a well-ventilated area
 - o away from emergency food or water supplies

Floods

FACT SHEET

Key Facts About Flood Readiness

Preparing for a Flood

Here are some basic steps to take to prepare for the storm:

- Contact the local county geologist or county planning department to find out if your home is located in a flash-flood-prone area or landslides-prone area.
- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be the "family contact" in case your family is separated during a flood. Make out evacuation plans for family members the name, address, and phone number of a relative or friend.

- Post emergency phone numbers at every phone.
- Inform local authorities about any special needs, i.e., elderly or bedridden people, or anyone with a disability.
- Identify potential home hazards and know how to secure or protect them before the flood strikes. Be prepared to turn off electrical power when there is standing water, fallen power lines, or before you evacuate. Turn off gas and water supplies before you evacuate. Secure structurally unstable building materials.
- Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where it is and how to use it.
- Buy and install sump pumps with back-up power.
- Have a licensed electrician raise electric components (switches, sockets, circuit breakers and wiring) at least 12" above your home's projected flood elevation.
- For drains, toilets, and other sewer connections, install backflow valves or plugs to prevent floodwaters from entering.
- Anchor fuel tanks which can contaminate your basement if torn free.

If you are under a flood watch or warning:

- Gather the emergency supplies you previously stocked in your home and stay tuned to local radio or television station for updates.
- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if evacuation appears necessary.
- Have your immunization records handy or be aware of your last tetanus shot, in case you should receive a puncture wound or a wound becomes contaminated during or after the flood.
- Fill bathtubs, sinks and plastic soda bottles with clean water. Sanitize the sinks and tubs first by using bleach. Rinse and fill with clean water.
- Bring outdoor possessions, such as lawn furniture, grills and trash cans inside or tie them securely.

Emergency Supplies You Will Need

You should stock your home with supplies that may be needed during the emergency period. At a minimum, these supplies should include:

- Several clean containers for water, large enough for a 3-5 day supply of water (about five gallons for each person).
- A 3-5 day supply of non-perishable food and a new electric can opener.
- A first aid kit and manual and prescription medicines and special medical needs.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries.
- Sleeping bags or extra blankets.
- Water-purifying supplies, such as chlorine or iodine tablets or unscented, undyed household chlorine bleach.
- Extra food and/or prepared to eat, dry goods and the baby supplies.

- Disposable cleaning cloths, such as "baby wipes" for the whole family to use in case bathing facilities are not available.
- Personal hygiene supplies, such as soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, etc.
- An emergency kit for your car with food, flares, booster cables, maps, tools, a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, sleeping bags, etc.
- Rubber boots, sturdy shoes, and waterproof gloves.
- Insect repellent containing DEET or Picaridin, screens, or long-sleeved and long-legged clothing for protection from mosquitoes which may gather in pooled water remaining after the flood. (More information about these and other recommended repellents can be found in the fact sheet "Updated Information Regarding Insect Repellents" at <http://www.eide.gov/ncidod/dybd/westside/RepellentUpdates.html>.)

Preparing to Evacuate

Expect the need to evacuate and prepare for it. When a flood watch is issued, you should:

- Fill your vehicle's gas tank and make sure the emergency kit for your car is ready.
- If no vehicle is available, make arrangements with friends or family for transportation.
- Fill your clean water containers.
- Review your emergency plans and supplies, checking to see if any items are missing.
- Tune in the radio or television for weather updates.
- Listen for disaster sirens and warning signals.
- Put livestock and family pets in a safe area. Due to food and sanitation requirements, emergency shelters cannot accept animals.
- Adjust the thermostat on refrigerators and freezers to the coolest possible temperature.

If You Are Ordered to Evacuate

You should never ignore an evacuation order. Authorities will direct you to leave if you are in a low-lying area, or within the greatest potential path of the rising waters. If a flood warning is issued for your area or you are directed by authorities to evacuate the area,

- Take only essential items with you.
- If you have time, turn off the gas, electricity, and water.
- Disconnect appliances to prevent electrical shock when power is restored.
- Turn off the thermostat to prevent pipes from bursting from a frozen pipe.

- Do not attempt to drive or walk across creeks or flooded roads.

If You Are Ordered NOT to Evacuate

To get through the storm in the safest possible manner:

- Monitor the radio or television for weather updates.
- Prepare to evacuate to a shelter or to a neighbor's home if your home is damaged, or if you are instructed to do so by emergency personnel.