

# Tornado season is here: Learn the facts and fiction

Although tornadoes occur in many parts of the world, they are found most frequently in the United States. In an average year, 1,200 tornadoes cause 60-65 fatalities and 1,500 injuries nationwide. You can find more information on tornadoes at [www.spc.noaa.gov](http://www.spc.noaa.gov).

### Tornado Facts

- ✓ A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a cumuliform cloud, such as a thunderstorm, to the ground.
- ✓ Tornadoes may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms within the funnel. The average tornado moves from southwest to northeast, but tornadoes can move in any direction and can suddenly change their direction of motion.
- ✓ The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 mph but may vary from nearly stationary to 70 mph.
- ✓ The strongest tornadoes have rotating winds of more than 200 mph.
- ✓ Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land.
- ✓ Waterspouts are tornadoes that form over warm water. Waterspouts can move onshore and cause damage to coastal areas.

### Be Ready Year Round

- ✓ Tornadoes can occur at any time of day, any day of the year.
- ✓ Have a plan of action before severe weather threatens. You need to respond quickly when a warning is issued or a tornado is spotted.
- ✓ When conditions are warm, humid, and windy, or skies are threatening, monitor for severe weather watches and warnings by listening to NOAA Weather Radio, logging onto [weather.gov](http://weather.gov) or tuning into your favorite television or radio weather information source.

### Tornado Fact and Fiction

**FICTION:** Lakes, rivers, and mountains protect areas from tor-

nadoes.

**FACT:** No geographic location is safe from tornadoes. A tornado near Yellowstone National Park left a path of destruction up and down a 10,000 foot mountain.

**FICTION:** A tornado causes buildings to “explode” as the tornado passes overhead.

**FACT:** Violent winds and debris slamming into buildings cause the most structural damage.

**FICTION:** Open windows before a tornado approaches to equalize pressure and minimize damage.

**FACT:** Virtually all buildings leak. Leave the windows closed. Take shelter immediately. An underground shelter, basement or safe room are the safest places. If none of those options are available, go to a windowless interior room or hallway.

**FICTION:** Highway overpasses provide safe shelter from tornadoes.

**FACT:** The area under a highway overpass is very dangerous in a tornado.

If you are in a vehicle, you should immediately seek shelter in a sturdy building. As a last resort, you can either: stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible, OR if you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands. Your choice should be driven by your specific circumstances.

**FICTION:** It is safe to take shelter in the bathroom, hallway, or closet of a mobile home.

**FACT:** Mobile homes are not safe during tornadoes! Abandon your mobile home to seek shelter in a sturdy building immediately. If you live in a mobile home, ensure you have a plan in place that identifies the closest sturdy buildings.