

Harris County

HCPHES

Public Health & Environmental Services

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TORNADO Fact Sheet

Be Prepared – Protect Loved Ones

Tornadoes are nature's most violent and unpredictable storms. A tornado can travel for miles and along the ground, lift and quickly change direction and strike again. There is little you can do to protect your home or workplace from the strength of tornado winds, but there are actions you can take to protect yourself and your family.

BEFORE A TORNADO

Conduct tornado drills each tornado season. Discuss with family members the difference between a "tornado watch" and a "tornado warning." A "tornado watch" is given when weather is favorable to the formation of tornadoes. A "tornado warning" is given when a tornado funnel is sighted or indicated by radar. Designate an area in the home as a shelter, and practice having everyone in the family go there.

Mobile homes are vulnerable. A mobile home can overturn very easily even if precautions have been taken to tie down the unit. Plan ahead. Make arrangements to stay with friends or relatives. Go there if a tornado watch is issued. *DO NOT STAY IN A MOBILE HOME.*

Learn these tornado *danger* signs:

- An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible.
- Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still.
- Tornadoes usually occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

[Develop a Family Emergency Plan](#) (place hyperlink to the Family Emergency Plan)

In case family members are separated from one another during a hurricane (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together.

Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "*family contact*." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

Identify temporary accommodation, such as a friend's place or hotel, where you can stay for a few days in case you are evacuated. *Don't forget to plan for pets – they are not always welcome in emergency shelters or hotels.*

[Make a Disaster Supply Kit](#)

A disaster can happen at any time. You will need a disaster supply kit if you and your family are confined to your home or need to evacuate. Your kit can be big or small, depending on your needs. A disaster supply kit should include items in **five** basic areas: (1) water and food, (2) medications, personal hygiene and first aid supplies, (3) clothing and bedding, (4) emergency supplies and tools, and (5) important documents.

Make sure that your items are in easy-to-carry containers or duffle bags and stored in a handy place. Check and update your kit at least once a year. This *suggested checklist* will help you gather the basic supply items needed for you and your family, including pets for **3 -5** days.

1. Three – five day supply of water and food:

- 9 -15 gallons of water per person or pet use.
- Non-perishable food, such as canned meats, fruits, and vegetables
- Powdered milk and canned juices
- High-energy snacks and comfort/stress foods
- Baby food and/ or prepared formula
- Food for individuals with special diet needs
- Food for Pets
- Pet food and water bowls

- ❑ Pedialyte (to restore hydration if needed)
- ❑ Non-breakable cups, plates and plastic utensils
- ❑ Manual can opener

2. Medications, personal hygiene and first aid supplies:

- ❑ A week's supply of each person's prescription medication
- ❑ Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever
- ❑ Anti-diarrhea medication, antacid and laxative
- ❑ Extra prescription contact lenses, glasses, or sunglasses
- ❑ Hygiene items - shampoo, toothpastes, toothbrushes, denture items, soap, deodorant, sanitary napkins, unscented household bleach, comb and brush, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, liquid detergent and disposable "baby wipes" for the whole family to use in case bathing facilities are not available.
- ❑ Baby diapers, bottles, pacifiers and other supplies
- ❑ Pet medications (a week's supply) and medical records stored in a waterproof container

Recommended First Aid Supplies

- ❑ Band-Aids in assorted sizes
- ❑ Sterile gauze pads in assorted sizes
- ❑ Clean gloves (at least 2 pairs)
- ❑ Antiseptic and antibiotic ointment
- ❑ Petroleum jelly
- ❑ Assorted sizes of safety pins
- ❑ Scissors, tweezers, and thermometer
- ❑ Sunscreen
- ❑ Insect repellent

3. Clothing and bedding supplies:

- ❑ 3 – 5 day change of clothing and footwear per person
- ❑ Blankets or sleeping bags and pillows
- ❑ Rain gear
- ❑ Entertainment – include games and books, favorite dolls and stuffed animals for small children

4. Emergency Supplies and Tools:

- ❑ Cash or traveler's checks, coins
- ❑ Map of the area for locating shelters, other places you could go and their telephone numbers
- ❑ Car items: flares, booster cables, tools, and etc.
- ❑ An extra set of keys for cars and any other properties owned
- ❑ Battery-powered or NOAA Weather radio, flashlight and extra batteries
- ❑ Fire extinguisher
- ❑ Pliers and shut-off wrench to turn off household water and/or gas
- ❑ Plastic sheeting, storage containers and bucket with tight lid
- ❑ Plastic trash bags and ties for sanitation
- ❑ Tape (duct, masking)
- ❑ Candles and Matches in a waterproof container
- ❑ Paper, pencil
- ❑ Aluminum foil

5. Important documents should be kept in a secured waterproof, portable container:

- ❑ Insurance policies
- ❑ Contracts and deeds
- ❑ Copies of birth certificates, drivers' license, and work ID card
- ❑ Stocks and bonds
- ❑ Social Security cards and passports
- ❑ Immunization records and prescriptions
- ❑ Bank account numbers
- ❑ Credit card account numbers and company names and telephone numbers
- ❑ Inventory of valuable household goods (include photos)
- ❑ Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates) and wills
- ❑ Current photographs of family members

DURING A TORNADO

If at home:

- Move away from the windows – Flying glass can injure or kill.
- Go to an interior room on the lowest floor, like a closet, hallway, or bathroom with no windows.
- Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they tend to attract debris.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Keep tuned to local radio and TV stations or to a NOAA Weather Radio.
- Cover your body with a blanket or sleeping bag.
- Use your arms to protect head and neck.

If in a mobile home, get out and find shelter elsewhere when a tornado warning is issued. If shelter is not available, lie in a ditch or low-lying area a safe distance away from the unit. Put your arms over your head. *Don't take shelter under your home.*

If at work or school:

- Go to the basement or to an inside hallway at the lowest level.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways, or shopping malls.
- Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table or desk and hold on to it.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If outdoors:

- If possible, get inside a building.
- If shelter is not available or there is no time to get indoors, lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- Do not go into a grove of trees or under a vehicle.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.

If in a car:

- Never try to out drive 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.
- Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building.
- If there is no time to get indoors, get out of the car and lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle. Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- Do not go under a vehicle.
- Use your arms to protect your head and neck.

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AFTER A TORNADO

- Beware of broken glass and downed power lines
- Help injured or trapped persons.
- Give first aid when appropriate.
- Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury.
- Use caution entering a damaged building.
- Call for help.
- Turn on radio or television to get the latest emergency information.
- Stay out of damaged buildings. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the buildings if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take pictures of the damage--both to the house and its contents--for insurance purposes.

Stress can surface in many forms and affect children as well as adults. Crisis counseling helps disaster victims deal with emotional reactions, such as sadness or anger, caused by stressful situations. Counselors can help adults and children gain emotional control by offering them coping mechanisms, including stress management techniques. For more information, on crisis counseling contact the Mental Health and Mental Retardation Authority of Harris at (713) 970-7000.

Source of Information:

www.cdc.gov

www.fema.org

www.mhmraharris.org/