

Tornado Season is Upon Us! Are You Prepared?

Unlike hurricanes that form far out in the ocean and take many days to make landfall, tornadoes often give little warning before they form and strike. Most people are not aware that here in Florida tornadoes also often form in the ocean from thunderstorms and water spouts not far from the beach and then come ashore to become tornadoes. Another interesting fact is that tornado activity in Florida is generally heavier in winter and spring months and will sometimes strike in the middle of the night. Given the significant El Niño weather pattern that we are currently experiencing, tornadic activity is highly more likely to be a problem in Florida this season.

Per the Charlotte County Emergency Management Agency, you should be familiar with the following terms:

Tornado watch: Conditions are favorable for the formation of tornadoes. Be aware of changing weather conditions.

Tornado warning: A tornado has been sighted in your area. Take shelter immediately.

Tornado: A violent, whirling, funnel-shaped cloud that touches the ground.

Funnel Cloud: A violent, whirling, funnel-shaped cloud that does not touch the ground. Many people mistakenly call these tornadoes.

Waterspout: A tornado over water.

Tornado Preparedness Tips:

****First and Foremost** – have a functional NOAA Weather Radio in your home to warn you of impending danger, day or night!**

Tips For Tornado Watches:

1. Stay tuned to local radio or your NOAA weather radio.
2. Secure any loose objects outdoors, or move them inside.
3. Survey local structures for the most suitable shelter.
4. Keep watching the sky. If you see any funnel shaped clouds. Report them immediately to the nearest law enforcement agency or emergency management.

Tips For Tornado Warnings:

Take shelter immediately!

1. In a Motor Vehicle: This is the least desirable place to be. Do not try an outrun the funnel cloud or tornado. Do not get under or next to you vehicle. Try to find indoor shelter immediately. If all else fails, try to find a ditch or depression to get in.
2. At School: Follow the school disaster plan. Stay away from gyms and auditoriums. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.

3. Open Country: Move away from the tornado at a right angle. Seek shelter in a ravine, ditch, or culvert. A low spot in the ground will give you some protection.

4. At Home: Stay away from windows. Move into an area with no windows such as a bathroom or a closet. The bathroom is the safest due to the fact that the plumbing gives extra support to the walls. Also, your bathtub may be able to provide you with some protection.

5. In a Mobile Home: This another one of the least desirable place to be. Seek other shelter immediately. Go to another shelter on foot, if possible. Do not get under your mobile home. Lie in a ditch or other ground depression if all else fails.

Sources: North Port Sun, January 7, 2016, page 14

Charlotte County Emergency Management Agency