

# Tornadoes

## **What is a tornado?**

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air that extends from the clouds to the ground and is often, although not always, visible as a funnel cloud. Lightening and hail are common in storms that produce tornadoes.

Tornadoes may strike quickly, with little to no warning, causing extensive damage to structures and disrupting transportation, power, water, gas, communications and other services in its direct path and in neighboring areas.

## **TORNADO WATCH - BE AWARE**

Tornadoes are possible. Move close to a shelter or sturdy building in case there is a warning.

## **TORNADO WARNING - TAKE ACTION**

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.

## **Before a Tornado**

- Identify safe rooms or protective locations at home, school or work before a tornado threat arises so that you have a plan for where to go for safety when a tornado warning is issued.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions and tune in to NOAA weather radio, local media and social media for the latest information.
- Look for the following danger signs: dark, often greenish sky; large hail; large, dark, low-lying cloud formation or rotation; or a loud roar similar to a freight train.
- Have an emergency communication plan in place for your family.
- Build an emergency kit by downloading our checklist online at [www.vaemergency.gov](http://www.vaemergency.gov)!

## **During a Tornado**

### **IN A BUILDING?**

- Go to a safe room: basement, cellar, or the lowest building level.
- If there is no basement, go to an inside room: a closet or hallway.
- Stay away from corners, windows, doors and outer walls. Never open windows.
- Protect your head!

### **IN A MOBILE HOME?**

- Get out immediately and go to the closest building or storm shelter.

### **IN A MOBILE HOME OR CAN'T FIND SHELTER?**

- Get into a vehicle and buckle your seatbelt.
- Put your head down below the windows and cover your head with your hands.
- If there is no car or shelter, try to find a ditch or area lower than the ground to lie down in. You are safer in a low, flat location than under a bridge or highway overpass.

## **“TORNADO ALLEY”**

While tornadoes are most common in the central part of the U.S. known as “Tornado Alley,” Virginia has seen it’s fair share of twisters. In 2004 there were 87 recorded tornadoes, and in 2017 we saw 25 tornadoes.

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<https://www.vaemergency.gov>

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