

Severe Weather Tornado



Tornado Warning Signs

Tornadoes are unmistakable rotating columns of high-velocity wind that bring devastation to anything in their path. Ontario averages 13 tornadoes per year. Most tornadoes occur in June, July and August although the season extends from April to September. They can occur at any time of the year. They frequently develop in mid-afternoon to early evening.

Environment Canada warns the public about tornadoes but because they are hard to predict and can move at up to 70 km/hr, a tornado can strike without warning. Typically, a tornado is preceded by a severe thunderstorm and is associated with black skies, strong wind and heavy rain or hail. Sometimes the sky will turn an unusual green colour and the wind will sound like a freight train.

Funnel clouds normally appear just after heavy rain or hail, at the rear base of a thunderstorm. Often a cloud of swirling debris or flash of electrical power lines can be seen along its path.

When a tornado threatens:

- Take shelter immediately, if available, preferably in the basement or lowest level of a sturdy building.
- Stay away from windows, doors and exterior walls. Flying glass is extremely dangerous.
- Don't waste time opening windows to keep pressure from building up in the house. It's unlikely to help anyway.
- Outdoors, with no shelter available, lie flat in a ditch, ravine or other low lying area, and shield your head with your arms.
- Don't get caught in a vehicle or mobile home, which the tornado can lift. Take shelter elsewhere or, if none is available, even a ditch offers better protection.
- Choose a location where your vehicle won't be hurled or rolled on top of you. More than half of tornado deaths occur in mobile homes. If you live in a mobile home, it is wise to identify a nearby sturdy shelter well in advance, and go to that shelter when a severe storm is approaching.
- Beware of flying debris. Even small objects such as sticks and straw can become lethal missiles.

Know the risks

Make a plan

Prepare a kit

Be Weather Aware!

Consider the potential for severe weather when you are planning your daily activities. Don't get caught outdoors when thunderstorms threaten. Remember, severe thunderstorms can produce tornadoes!

Preparation you can't live without.

Your best shelter:

- In a house, go to the basement and take shelter under a stairway or a sturdy work table in the centre of the house.
- In a house with no basement, the safest spot is the ground floor in the centre of the house. Small rooms tend to be more structurally sound so seek shelter in a hallway, small room, closet or bathroom (the plumbing may provide some structural stability). Lying in the bathtub with a mattress on top of you may provide good protection.
- In a vehicle or mobile home, get outside and find other shelter. North American officials still debate whether seeking shelter in a car during a tornado is safe. Some advise, if the tornado is weak, a car can offer protection against flying debris and rollovers if the occupants fasten seat belts and keep their heads down.
- However, there is no way of knowing how strong or violent a tornado is without the proper tools, so the safest strategy is to get out of the vehicle. As a last resort, lie in a ditch or culvert but be aware of flooding.
- Avoid wide-span buildings, such as barns, auditoriums, shopping centres and supermarkets with large roofs.
- Go to a nearby sturdy shelter, preferably, on the lower floor, an inside room, restroom or hallway, or get underneath a sturdy piece of furniture.
- At school, seek shelter in small windowless rooms such as a washroom instead of a gymnasium.
- Avoid areas near high walls or large chimneys which may collapse.
- In shopping centres, stay out of aisles and away from exterior walls and windows. Do not go to your parked car.
- In high-rise buildings, move to lower levels, small interior rooms or stairwells. Stay away from elevators and windows.



When Disaster Strikes

- Remain calm. Coordinated emergency services are responding.
- Help family members and neighbours.
- Don't forget your pets!

Make your plans accordingly — know what to do before you need to do it! Check Environment Canada's site for their Tips on Preparing for Summer Severe Weather at www.ec.gc.ca

For more tips on emergency preparedness:

www.london.ca/emergency www.ontario.ca/emo www.GetPrepared.ca