

## Coping with tornadoes

Tornadoes can happen during any time of year. They can happen during the day or at night. Knowing what to do when you see a tornado or hear a warning can help protect you and your family. Tornadoes can bring very high winds. These winds can cause flying and falling objects. The wreckage left after a tornado can cause other injuries. Nothing can be done to prevent tornadoes. But there are steps you can take for your health and safety.

### Injuries

Injuries may happen from the direct impact of a tornado. Or they may happen after the storm. Injuries can be caused by:

- Falling objects.
- Heavy, rolling objects.
- Damaged power lines, gas lines, or electrical systems. There can be a risk of fire or an explosion.

Quickly treat any injuries suffered during the storm to protect yourself and your family. Take care to prevent more injuries.

### Inspecting the damage

- After a tornado there may be dangers in your home. They may be structural or electrical. Or there may be gas leaks. Contact your local city or county building inspectors for information on safety codes and standards. They may also tell you how to find someone who can do repair work for you.
- If you think there is any damage to your home, shut off:
  - Electrical power.
  - Natural gas.
  - Propane tanks.Doing this will help you to avoid fire, electrocution, or explosions.
- Use a flashlight rather than a candle or torch if it is dark when you are inspecting your home. This will help you avoid fires or an explosion.
- Shut off the electrical system at the main circuit breaker right away if you see frayed wiring or sparks. Also do this if it smells like something is burning.
- If you smell gas or think there may be a leak:
  - Turn off the main gas valve.

- Open all windows.
- Leave the house right away.
- Notify the gas company, the police or fire departments, or State Fire Marshal's office.
- Do not turn on the lights. Do not light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark.
- Do not return to your house until you are told it is safe to do so.

### **Safety during clean up**

- Wear sturdy shoes or boots. Also wear long sleeves and gloves.
- Do not operate gas-powered or electric saws or tools without knowing proper safety procedures and instructions.
- Clean up spills. Spilled liquids can include:
  - Medicines or other drugs.
  - Flammable liquids.
  - Other dangerous materials.

### **Children's needs**

Children may be afraid a tornado will come back again. They may be afraid they will be injured or left alone. Children may even interpret disasters as punishment for something they have done. Tell them that a tornado is a natural event. Children will be less likely to have fear or anxiety if they know what to expect after a tornado. Here are some ideas:

- Talk about your own experiences with severe storms. Or read your child a book about tornadoes.
- Encourage your child to express feelings of fear. Listen carefully and show understanding.
- Tell your child that the situation is not permanent. Spend time together and show affection to make him or her feel comforted.
- Include your child in clean-up activities. It is comforting to children to watch the household begin to return to normal and to have a job to do.

### **Tools and resources**

- Be informed and know what to do before and after a tornado hits:  
<http://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>
- Severe weather 101 – know the basics about tornadoes:  
<http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/education/svrwx101/tornadoes/>
- American Red Cross tornado warning tool for smartphones:  
<http://www.redcross.org/mobile-apps/tornado-app>