
01 / BEFORE THE EVENT

Tornadoes & severe storms

Know the shelter before the warning.

A practiced shelter route, reliable alerts and the myths that can waste the few minutes you have.

ACT FIRST When a tornado warning applies to you, move to your planned shelter immediately. Do not go outside to look for the funnel or delay sheltering to collect equipment. [1, 2]

Pick the shelter at each regular location

Identify a basement, purpose-built safe room or small interior room on the lowest floor of a sturdy building, away from windows. Learn the school or workplace plan too. Large open rooms such as gymnasiums are poor shelter choices. [1, 2]

If you live in a mobile home, plan elsewhere

A mobile home, tent or shed is not a safe tornado shelter. Arrange access to a nearby sturdy shelter before storms arrive, including transport and help for people who need it. Leave enough time to get there safely. [1]

Keep alerts and essentials close

Prepare more than one way to receive official warnings, including a battery radio. Place a flashlight, shoes and necessary supplies near the shelter. Practice getting there with household members so the route is familiar. [1, 2]

U.S. and Canadian sources. Apply current local instructions wherever you live. This guide is not a live alert service or an official agency publication.

02 / DURING AND AFTER

When conditions change

DURING THE EVENT

Get low and protect your head and neck

Use the planned interior shelter. Get under sturdy furniture if available and cover your head and neck. Stay away from windows and follow the site emergency plan. Do not use an elevator. [2]

Avoid false shelters

Do not shelter under a highway overpass. If travelling, seek a nearby sturdy building when you can reach it safely; do not try to outrun the tornado. A vehicle is not a reliable tornado shelter. [2, 1]

AFTER THE IMMEDIATE THREAT

Keep listening for further warnings

One tornado passing does not end the threat. Follow local instructions before leaving shelter. Once safe to move, watch for broken glass, unstable structures and downed electrical lines. [2]

Communicate without entering damaged areas

Use text messages for routine check-ins where service is available; reserve emergency calls for urgent help. Stay out of an unsafe home. Do not turn on switches or light a flame where a gas leak is suspected. [2]

03 / DETAILS WORTH KNOWING

Small details. Better decisions.

Opening windows wastes shelter time

Public Safety Canada advises keeping windows closed during a tornado. Your priority is getting to shelter and protecting your head, not trying to equalize pressure. [2]

A stationary-looking tornado may be approaching

A funnel that appears not to move can be travelling toward you. Do not use its apparent position as a reason to stay outside or film it. [2]

Where backup power fits

Put a charged phone, a small compatible power bank and an LED light in the shelter kit before the storm. Backup power helps you hear instructions afterward; it should not create extra tasks once the warning arrives. Test your alert setup when conditions are calm and keep a paper contact list in the shelter.

Try this before you need it

Time an ordinary walk to your chosen shelter without rushing. Check doors, stairs and accessibility. If anyone cannot reach it reliably, change the plan now rather than expecting them to move faster during a warning.

Local context: Canada

Use Environment and Climate Change Canada warnings and Alert Ready information for your location. Canada records tornadoes beyond the Prairie provinces; make a local plan wherever you live.

04 / YOUR HOUSEHOLD ACTION CARD

Write it down. Keep it handy.

Complete this page before an emergency. Review when your household, equipment or local instructions change.

Home shelter / access instructions

Alternative sturdy shelter if needed

Work or school shelter information

Person who helps / essential items nearby

Official warning channels / household contact

READY CHECK

- ☐ Shelter chosen at home and work/school
- ☐ Mobile-home alternative arranged if needed
- ☐ Route practiced with accessibility needs
- ☐ Alerts, light and footwear ready
- ☐ Everyone knows not to open windows or film

SOURCES / Numbers refer to the actions in this guide

1. [NOAA / NWS - What to do during a tornado](#)
2. [Public Safety Canada - Tornadoes: get prepared](#)

Original summaries and planning prompts by StillPower Guide, operated by Mihai Florea. Sources checked October 24, 2026. No agency endorsement. The linked sources provide fuller guidance.