

Tornadoes

What Is A Tornado?

A Tornado is a violent storm with whirling winds of up to 300 miles per hour. It appears as a funnel shaped cloud, from gray to black in color, which extends to the ground from the base of the thunderstorm.

A tornado spins like a top and may sound like the roaring of an airplane or locomotive. Their direction of travel can be erratic and may change suddenly. These short-lived storms are the most violent of all atmospheric phenomena and the most destructive, over a small area.

When Can A Tornado Occur?

Most tornadoes in Connecticut are likely to occur during the months of June, July, and August; however, they can occur at any time, often with little or no warning. Fewer tornadoes occur in the fall and spring. Most tornadoes in Connecticut are considered weak, with winds of 50 to 100 MPH. On August 9, 1878, a violent tornado swept through the village of Wallingford, Connecticut. It is the second worst tornado in New England history in terms of loss of life, after the great Worcester tornado of 1953. It is estimated that the Wallingford tornado would be classified as an F4 in intensity on today's Fujita Scale, with the force of winds lying between 207 and 250 miles per hour. At least 35 people were killed, and 90 structures totally demolished.

Tornado Watch or Tornado Warning?

The National Weather Service broadcasts severe weather conditions over the emergency alerting system as well as NOAA Weather Radio (see page 28 for the NOAA weather station in your area).

When they post a tornado watch, they want the public to know that conditions are right for a tornado. When a tornado warning is posted for a given area, a tornado has been sighted or has been detected on radar. The warning will

include those cities in the path of the storm. In general, a watch means, “Caution, Watch the Sky” and a warning means “Danger, Take Cover”.

What protective actions should I take for Tornados?

For Tornado Watches:

When conditions are right for a tornado, there are a few things, listed below, you should do:

1. Stay tuned to a local weather station or listen to 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 to the west and northwest. If you see any funnel shaped clouds, report them immediately to the nearest law enforcement agency and take cover.

For Tornado Warnings:

This means a tornado has been spotted near your area or is predicted to come your way. **TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY!!** Do not leave shelter until you are sure no further danger exists. Remember, there is no guaranteed safe place during a tornado. Here are some examples of places you may be in:

1. **In a Motor Vehicle:** The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Never try to outrun a tornado in your car. Stop your vehicle and get out. Seek shelter elsewhere. Do not get under or next to your vehicle. A ditch or ground depression will help, if a tornado shelter is not nearby.
2. **At School:** Follow the school disaster plan. Stay away from auditoriums, gymnasiums, and other areas with wide, free-span roofs. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.
3. **Open Country:** Move away from the tornado’s projected path at right angles. Seek shelter in a ditch, ravine, or culvert. Even a low spot in the

ground will give you some protection. Stay away from trees and remember to protect your head.

4. **In a Home or Condo:** The best place to go is the innermost hallway on the lowest floor. An interior closet is relatively safe. An interior bathroom is even better. The walls are close together and the bathtub, sink, and toilet help support debris in case the house collapses. **AVOID WINDOWS**, since flying debris does most of the killing. The worst kind of flying debris is broken glass. **DO NOT** open any windows to equalize pressure when a tornado approaches. If a tornado actually gets close enough for the pressure drop to be experienced, the strong winds have probably already caused the most significant damage. Opening windows, in fact, may actually increase damage.
5. **In a Mobile or Manufactured Home:** These homes are easy to damage by flying debris and are one of the least desirable places to be during a tornado. If a tornado approaches, seek other shelter immediately. Go to a tornado shelter on foot, if possible. Do not drive your car. Do not get under your mobile home. If no other shelter is available, lie down in a ditch or a ground depression.