

Summer 2022

Source: Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

Tornado Terminology

Tornado Watch

A tornado watch means tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Listen to the media for updates.

Tornado Warning

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

Fujita-Pearson Scale

F-0: 40-72 MPH

Chimney damage, tree branches broken

F-1: 73-112 MPH

Mobile homes pushed off foundations/overturned

F-2: 113-157 MPH

Considerable damage, demolished mobile homes, uprooted trees

F-3: 158-205 MPH

Roofs/walls torn down, cars thrown, trains overturned

F-4: 207-260 MPH

Well-constructed walls leveled

F-5: 261-318 MPH

Homes lifted off foundations/carried considerable distances



Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms, with whirling winds that can reach 300 mph. Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long.

Massachusetts residents experienced the destruction of the Greater Springfield Tornado on June 1, 2011 which killed three, injured over 300, and destroyed or damaged over 1,400 homes and businesses.

The infamous Worcester Tornado, which swept through Central Massachusetts on June 9, 1953, killed 94 and seriously injured over 1,200. Over 4,300 homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged.

Although tornadoes as severe as the Springfield and Worcester tornadoes are rare, they can and do happen here in Massachusetts. It is important that everyone know what to look for and what steps to take if a tornado is forecast.

Before a Tornado Threatens

- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a battery backup and tone-alert feature, as well as a battery-powered commercial radio and extra batteries.
- Download the free Massachusetts Alerts app to your Smartphone to receive important weather alerts and emergency messages from MEMA. Easy instructions are available at www.mass.gov/info-details/be-informed-and-receive-emergency-alerts

- Determine locations to seek shelter, such as a basement or storm cellar. If an underground location is not available, identify interior room or hallway on lowest floor.
- Practice going to your shelter.
- Know locations of designated public shelters.
- Assemble a Disaster Supply Kit (see page two of this fact sheet).
- Make a record of your personal property, taking photographs/video of your belongings. Store these documents in a safe place.

During a Tornado Watch

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or commercial media for updates.
- Be on the lookout for the approaching storm, particularly a revolving funnel-shaped cloud. Other tornado danger signs include a dark, almost greenish sky, large hail, a large, dark, low-lying cloud, or a loud roar, similar to a freight train.
- Sometimes tornadoes develop so rapidly that there is no visible advanced warning.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as an auditorium, cafeteria, supermarket or shopping mall.
- Be prepared to take shelter immediately. Gather household members, pets and disaster supplies.

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Following are some supplies to be included in your disaster supply kit:

- 3-Day supply of non-perishable food
- Water (gallon per person per day)
- Can opener
- Bedding/sleeping bags
- Fire extinguisher
- Mosquito repellent
- Duct tape, tarp and rope
- Extra prescription medicine
- Toiletries
- Toilet paper
- Battery-operated radio
- Phone charger
- Eyeglasses (or prescription)
- First-Aid kit
- Flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Extra keys
- Sunglasses
- Eating utensils
- Hearing aids
- Money, checks or credit cards
- Contact list of your emergency contacts

In addition, Pastors should take with them:

- The Blessed Sacrament (if not already consumed)
- Sacred vessels
- Sacramental registers

During a Tornado Warning

- In a residence or small building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement or storm cellar. If there is none, go to an interior room on the lower level (closet, interior hallway). Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to cover your head and neck.
- Do not open windows. Use the time to seek shelter.
- Go to the center of the room, avoiding the corners, which attract debris.
- In large public buildings, go to predetermined shelter areas. Interior hallways on the lowest floor are usually safest. Stay away from windows and open spaces.
- In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest possible floor.
- Get out of vehicles, trailers and mobile homes immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building. Never try to outrun a tornado in a congested area.
- If caught outside with no shelter, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the potential of flooding.
- Do not go under a bridge or overpass. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Watch out for flying debris from tornadoes, the cause of most fatalities and injuries.

After a Tornado

- Listen to the media for the latest emergency information.
- Be aware of broken glass and downed power lines.
- Help injured or trapped persons. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury.
- Stay out of damaged buildings, returning only when authorities deem it safe.
- Use the landline telephone only in emergencies.
- Leave the area if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take photographs/video of the damage for insurance purposes.
- Remember to help your neighbors, particularly those who may require special assistance.



Build an Emergency Kit

Every home and business should have a stocked basic emergency supply kit that could be used for any emergency, regardless of the time of year. Everyone should keep certain items in the kit in the event you are isolated for three to five days without power or unable to go to a store.

While some items, such as bottled water, flashlights, extra batteries, and first aid supplies should be in everyone's kit, it is important to customize the kit for the specific needs of your organization. Consider adding critical medications, extra eyeglasses, contact lenses, dentures, batteries for hearing aids, and any other items you, your staff or clients might need. Food and supplies for pets and service animals should also be considered.

It is also a good idea to create a mobile "go-bag" version of your emergency kit in case you need to quickly evacuate to a shelter or other location, as an emergency shelter may not have all the items you need. At least annually, check your kit for any food, batteries, or other items that may need to be replaced or have expired.

Unoccupied Buildings

In the event of a tornado, it is especially important to monitor unoccupied buildings before and after a severe weather event. Immediately after the tornado, check the building for leaks, water damage or flooding. To prevent further damage and the accumulation of mold, make repairs as soon as possible.

Disaster Restoration Vendors

Our office has compiled a list of recommended disaster restoration vendors. To access the list, please go to our risk management website:

<https://rcabrisk.org/vendors/>