

Tornado Safety Tips

The following information and Tornado Safety Tips are provided by FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. All of our readers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the basics concerning tornadoes and tornado safety measures.

Pearl River community's 9 severe weather alert sirens are now fully installed and functional. They were made possible by a grant from the National Weather Service. The Choctaw Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will be testing the sirens audibly on the first Monday of each month at precisely 12:00 o'clock noon. If you hear the tornado sirens sounding at other times during threatening weather, please know that a tornado warning is in effect for the immediate area, and it is time to take cover without delay.

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms. Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, tornadoes can cause fatalities and devastate a neighborhood in seconds. A tornado appears as a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground with whirling winds that can reach 300 miles per hour. Damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long. Every state is at some risk from this hazard. Tornadoes are most likely to occur in Mississippi during the months of April and November.

Some tornadoes are clearly visible, while rain or nearby low-hanging clouds obscure others. Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that little, if any, advance warning is possible.

Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still. A cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible. Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

The following are facts about tornadoes:

- They may strike quickly, with little or no warning.
- They may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel.
- The average tornado moves Southwest to Northeast, but tornadoes have been known to move in any direction.
- The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 MPH, but may vary from stationary to 70 MPH.
- Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land.
- Waterspouts are tornadoes that form over water.
- Tornadoes are most frequently reported east of the Rocky Mountains during spring and summer months.
- Peak tornado season in the southern states is March through May; in the northern states, it is late spring through early summer.
- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m., but can occur at any time.

Know Your Tornado Terms

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a tornado hazard:

Tornado Watch

Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

Tornado Warning

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately. Tornado warnings must be taken very seriously by everyone. You will hear the tornado sirens being sounded in the community. Please take cover immediately.

What to do Before a Tornado

Be alert to changing weather conditions.

- Listen to [NOAA Weather Radio](#) or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information.
- Look for approaching storms
- Look for the following danger signs:
 - Dark, often greenish sky
 - Large hail
 - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
 - Loud roar, similar to a freight train.

If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.

What to Do During a Tornado

If you are under a tornado WARNING, seek shelter immediately!

If you are in:	Then:
A structure (e.g. residence, small building, school, nursing home, hospital, factory, shopping center, high-rise building)	Go to a pre-designated shelter area such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar, or the lowest building level. If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use

	<p>your arms to protect your head and neck. Do not open windows.</p>
<p>A vehicle, trailer, or mobile home</p>	<p>Get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building or a storm shelter. Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes.</p>
<p>The outside with no shelter</p>	<p>Lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the potential for flooding.</p> <p>Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.</p> <p>Never try to outrun a tornado in urban or congested areas in a car or truck. Instead, leave the vehicle immediately for safe shelter.</p> <p>Watch out for flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries.</p>