

# TORNADO

## WHAT IT IS

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms. They are characterized by a rapidly spinning column of air from 65 miles per hour to upwards of 200 miles per hour. Weak tornadoes will cause superficial damage to directly impacted buildings, while very strong tornadoes can destroy everything along paths hundreds of yards across. Tornadoes can accompany thunderstorms, tropical storms, and hurricanes. They can appear suddenly, without warning, and can be invisible until dust and debris are picked up or a funnel cloud appears. Note that there are no tornado sirens in Fairfax County.



## KEY TERMS

- ▶ A **Tornado Watch** means current weather conditions may result in a tornado.
- ▶ A **Tornado Warning** means a tornado has been sighted or indicated by a weather radar.
- ▶ The **Enhanced Fujita Scale** measures tornado strength by wind speed (EF0 to EF5).

## WHAT TO DO:

### Before (Preparedness/Mitigation)

- ❑ Sign up for Fairfax Alerts and have a battery or crank powered NOAA weather radio available.
- ❑ Practice sheltering in place in the interior of your residence or business.
  - If there is a tornado watch, pay attention to a weather radio, commercial radio, television, or a news website for up to date information.
  - During a tornado watch (not a warning), secure or bring inside any outdoor objects that could blow away or become “missiles” and cause damage.
- ❑ Watch for signs of a tornado: dark or greenish skies, hail, large, dark low-lying clouds, loud roar.
- ❑ Learn First Aid.

### During (Response)

- ❑ Listen to official information.
- ❑ Go immediately to the lowest level of your building, to an interior room or hallway.
- ❑ Stay away from windows and doorways.
- ❑ Do not stay in a trailer or a mobile home. Go immediately to a building with a strong foundation.
- ❑ If you are in a car, or if shelter is not available, lie flat in a ditch or other low-lying area. Do not seek refuge under a bridge or overpass.
- ❑ Plan to stay in your shelter location until the danger has passed.
- ❑ Refer to “Power Outage/ Blackout” and “Medical Emergency,” below.

### After (Recovery)

- ❑ Return home when local officials say it is safe.
- ❑ Stay clear from damaged buildings and infrastructure.
- ❑ Check in with family and friends by texting or using social media.