

**TORNADOES: THE TWISTING TERRORS**  
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When my husband first moved to the Midwest from southern California he always used to think of tornadoes as no big deal. But, after living in the Midwest for going on 16 years, he now has a greater sense of the awesomeness of tornadoes and takes tornado warnings very seriously. A few months back when the tornadoes went through the southern part of Indiana, it was Jeff who was lecturing me on, “Why didn’t you come home sooner? Did you not know about the tornado warnings?” My son, Sean, and I got caught up in this storm, while we were en route from Clarksville back to Salem. It was the most scared I have ever been for my safety.

**When is a tornado most likely to occur?**

The majority of tornadoes occur March - August, but a tornado can occur at anytime of the year. Tornadoes generally occur in the afternoon or evening, with 80% of tornadoes striking between noon and midnight.

**Where does Indiana rank?**

**#8 in terms of the number of killer tornadoes that have occurred in the past.**

**#3 in terms of annual tornadoes per 10,000 square miles.**

**#1 in terms of the most deadly tornado occurred in Indiana. This tornado occurred in 1923 and was referred to as the “Tri-State Tornado.” The “Tri State” left 689 people dead.**

**What should I do ahead of time and during a tornado?**

- 1. Conduct tornado drills each tornado season, since you only have a short amount of time to make life-or-death decisions. Designate an area in your home, and practice having everyone in the family go there in response to a tornado threat. Your safe area should be a basement; storm cellar; room that is a windowless, interior room, such as a bathroom or lowest level of the building. You should get away from windows. Get underneath a piece of sturdy furniture and hold onto it. Use your arms to protect your neck and head. If you are in a mobile home, get out and find shelter elsewhere. If no such building exists you should lie in a ditch or low-lying area a safe distance from your mobile home.**
- 2. Discuss with family what they are to do in the event they are outdoors when a tornado occurs. If outdoors you should get inside a building, if possible. If you are not able to get indoors, lie in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building. Be aware of the potential for flooding. You should use your arms to protect your head and neck.**
- 3. Discuss with family what to do in the event they are in their car when a tornado occurs. If in a car never try to out-drive a tornado. Get out of the car immediately and take shelter in a nearby building. If there is no time to get indoors get out of the car and lie in a ditch or low-lying area away from the vehicle. Be aware of the potential for flooding.**
- 4. Discuss with family the difference between a tornado watch and a tornado warning. A**

watch means that tornadoes are possible in your area and you should remain alert for approaching storms. This is the time to remind family where the safest place is within your home and you should continue to listen to the radio or television for further developments. A warning means a tornado has been sighted or indicated and you should go immediately to your safe area.

5. Discuss with family members the following tornado danger signs:
  - A. An approaching cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not present.
  - B. Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still.
  - C. Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.
6. Prepare an emergency kit, which includes the following items:
  - A. Water for each person in your household.
  - B. Non-perishable foods that do not have to be prepared or cooked. If these foods are canned, include a non-electric can opener.
  - C. A first-aid kit and manual, including necessary prescription medications.
  - D. Tools and supplies: flashlight (no candles or anything that lights with a flame), battery-operated radio, cell phone or CB, extra batteries, wrench (to turn off gas and water), clothing and bedding, sturdy shoes and cash and credit cards.
  - E. Special items: for baby - formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk  
for adult - contact lenses and supplies, extra glasses
7. In case family members are separated from one another during a tornado you should have a plan for meeting back up with one another. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a tornado, it's often easier to make long distance calls. Make sure everyone in your family knows the name, address and phone number of the contact person.

**What should I do after the tornado?**

1. Help injured or trapped persons and give first aid when appropriate.
2. Remember to help your neighbors who may require special assistance-infants, the elderly and persons with disabilities.
3. Don't try to move the seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help in this situation.
4. If you smell gas, do not turn on any appliances or switches. This includes using phones, flashlights or a cell phone.
5. Turn on a radio or television to get the latest emergency information, unless you smell gas.
6. Stay out of damaged building. Return home only when authorities say it is safe.
7. Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
8. Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, or gasoline or other flammable liquids immediately. Leave the buildings if you smell gas or other chemical fumes.
9. Take pictures of the damage-both to the house and contents-for insurance purposes.

Information for this article was obtained from the FEMA website, [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).