TORNADOES

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 winds that can reach 300 miles per hour. Damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide, and 50 miles long. Every state in America is at risk for tornadoes.

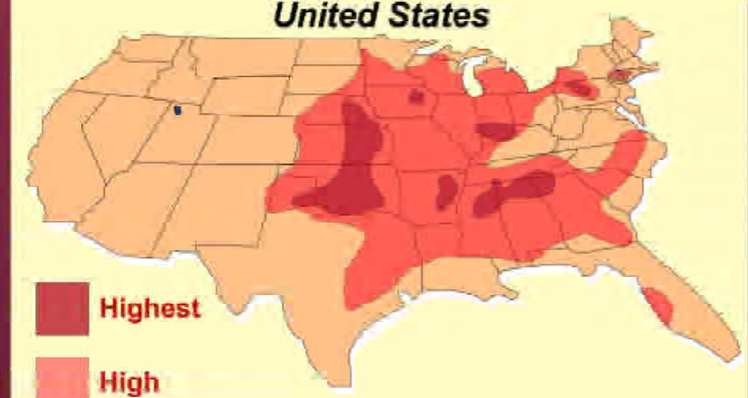
Some tornadoes are clearly visible, while rain or nearby low-hanging clouds may obscure others. Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down, and the air may become very still. A cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado if a funnel is not visible. Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm.

Some facts about tornadoes:

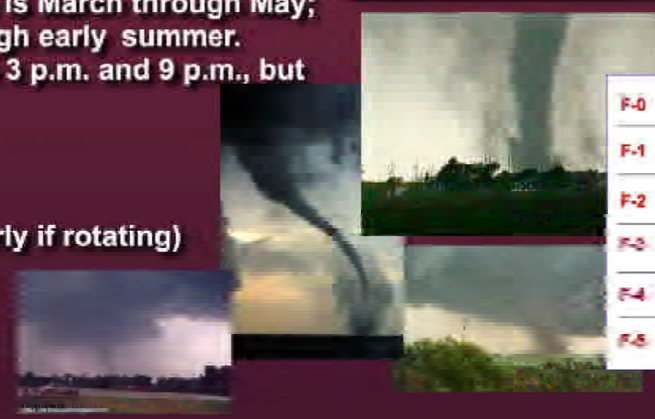
They may strike quickly, with little or no warning.
They may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel.
The average tornado moves Southwest to Northeast, but tornadoes have been known to move in any direction.
The average forward speed of a tornado is 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.
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 frieght train

Tornado Risk Areas in the Continental United States



Source: United States Geological Survey



Fugita Scale

F-0	40-72 mph	*Light damage.* Some damage to chimneys, branches broken off trees, shallow-rooted trees pushed over, sign boards damaged.
F-1	73-112 mph	*Moderate damage.* Peels surface off roofs, mobile homes pushed off foundations or overturned, moving autos blown off road.
F-2	113-157 mph	*Considerable damage.* Roofs torn off frame houses, mobile homes demolished, boxcars overturned, large trees snapped or uprooted, cars lifted.
F-3	158-206 mph	*Severe damage.* Roofs and some walls torn off well-constructed houses, trains overturned, most trees in forests uprooted, heavy cars lifted.
F-4	207-260 mph	*Devastating damage.* Well-constructed houses leveled, structures with weak foundations blown away for some distance, cars thrown.
F-5	261-318 mph	*Incredible damage.* Strong frame houses leveled off foundations and swept away, trees debarked, automobile-size objects fly in excess of 100 meters.

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