

Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Albany NY
800 AM EDT Thu Apr 28 2016

...Severe Weather Awareness Week Continues...

Today we take an in depth look at tornadoes and conduct our New York severe weather communication drill at 115 pm.

Our region averages about five tornadoes per year. Tornadoes have occurred in New York and western New England during every season but are most common from May to August. Tornadoes can strike anywhere; valleys and mountains, cities and rural areas. Tornadoes are most common in the afternoon and evening, but can occur at all hours.

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air in contact with the ground and attached to the cloud above. The strongest tornadoes have wind speeds in excess of 200 mph, widths approaching one mile, tracks of many miles and durations of up to one hour. Fortunately, most tornadoes are considerably weaker and of shorter duration. Tornadoes typically move at about 30 mph, but can move as fast as 70 mph.

In New York and New England, about 77 percent of all tornadoes are weak, 21 percent strong, and only about two percent are considered violent. Tornado damage is rated on the EF-Scale. The weakest tornadoes are EF-0 while the strongest are EF-5. The strongest tornadoes recorded in the Albany Forecast Area since 1950 have been rated EF-4, which are violent, and caused considerable damage and loss of life.

Tornadoes form in an environment conducive to thunderstorm development. Winds changing direction and speed with height produce a horizontal spinning in the atmosphere. Strong upward motions in thunderstorms tilt the horizontal rotation to the vertical. An area of rotation develops through the much of the thunderstorm. Most tornadoes form in this area of rotation called the mesocyclone.

A number of tornado myths exist. A myth; windows should be opened to equalize air pressure. Leave the windows alone. Seek shelter immediately! Another myth; low pressure associated with tornadoes causes buildings to explode. Violent tornadic winds and debris slamming into a structure cause most of the damage. A myth; if you are caught outside you should seek shelter under an overpass. Seek shelter in a sturdy reinforced building or underground. Outdoor shelter may provide limited protection, but your risk will be reduced by moving inside a basement or strong building.

The National Weather Service issues tornado watches and warnings to alert the public to a tornado threat. A tornado watch means tornadoes are possible. Continue with your daily routine, but be ready to take quick action should a tornado warning be issued. A tornado warning means that tornadoes are imminent or occurring. Seek shelter immediately, in a basement if possible.

You should prepare for tornadoes now. Develop a severe weather safety plan. Identify safe shelters where you can go should a tornado threaten. Know the basic weather safety terms. Keep tuned to your favorite media outlet for the latest National Weather Service information concerning tornadoes.

At 115 pm today, the National Weather Service, the New York State Office of Emergency Management, the New York State Department Of Education and the New York State Broadcasters Association will conduct a test of the hazardous weather warning system. This drill allows us to test communications systems available during hazardous weather situations.

NOAA Weather Radio offers one way to receive immediate relay of tornado warnings. Many local television and radio stations also broadcast weather alerts. Computers and wireless devices can also receive warnings. National Weather Service tornado warnings are relayed as wireless emergency alerts to newer phones by FEMA.

Stay ahead of the weather with the help of the National Weather Service. Find us on the web at: <http://www.weather.gov/aly/>, on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/US.NationalWeatherService.Albany.gov, and on Twitter at: twitter.com/NWSAlbany .

Tomorrow we look at flash flooding.