

TORNADOES

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air that descend from thunderstorm clouds and make contact with the ground. All thunderstorms can produce tornadoes, but they are most likely to develop within supercells. Tornadoes come in a variety of sizes and shapes, having wind speeds as weak as 65 mph to over 200 mph. They move with the parent thunderstorm, with forward speeds ranging from nearly stationary to 70 mph. In Alabama, tornadoes are often rain-wrapped and hidden or obscured by terrain. This makes them more dangerous.

Courtesy of Nick Lee
Cullman County, Apr 27, 2011



Tornadoes can occur during any time of the year, at any time of day. Most tornadoes develop during two peak severe weather seasons: the spring months of March, April and May; and the fall months of November and early December. Alabamians are encouraged to be prepared when there is any potential for tornadoes.

TORNADO SAFETY

IN HOMES OR SMALL BUILDINGS:

Go to a pre-determined shelter, such as a basement. Get under something sturdy like a heavy table, if available. Protect yourself from flying debris with pillows, heavy coats, blankets, or quilts. Use bicycle or motorcycle helmets to protect your head.

If an underground shelter is not available, go to a small interior room, such as a closet, bathroom, or interior hallway, on the lowest level. Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Stay away from windows and doors.

IN MOBILE HOMES:

Leave well in advance of approaching severe weather and go to a strong building. If there is no shelter nearby, get into the nearest ditch, depression, or underground culvert and lie flat with your hands shielding your head.

IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS:

Go to the best available, designated protective area. Basements are best, but interior locations on the lowest level also offer protection. Stay away from windows and other hazards inherent to the building.

IN A VEHICLE:

If caught in your vehicle during a tornado, you have two options, neither one of them good. The first option is to remain in your car and try to out run the tornado, accurately determining the path and speed of the tornado. You can pull off the road and protect yourself from flying debris and shattering glass, hoping the tornado is not strong enough to pick up your vehicle. The other option, leaving your vehicle and taking shelter in a ditch. Unknown terrain, fencing, and other obstacles could make this difficult. Take cover far enough away from your car, so it and other heavy debris does not wind up on top of you. Remember, do not put yourself in the position to have to choose between these options.

Cullman County, Apr 27, 2011



Walker County, Apr 27, 2011

