



Tornado Preparedness

What To Do If A Tornado Threatens

Know the difference between a watch and a warning: A **watch** means conditions are favorable for the development of thunderstorms and tornadoes. A **warning** means a tornado has actually been sighted and **you should take shelter immediately.**

If you are inside: Go to the basement. If you don't have a basement, go to a windowless **interior room or hallway on the lowest level.** Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and protect your head and neck with your arms. To protect yourself from flying debris, cover yourself with a blanket or pillows. Do not open windows, it doesn't reduce tornado damage, instead use that time to seek shelter. If you are in a **mobile home, do not stay there** but go to the lowest floor of the nearest sturdy building or storm shelter.

If you are outside with no shelter: Lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head and neck with your arms. **Do not get under an overpass or bridge - you are safer in a low, flat location.** Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle, leave it for safer shelter.

Watch out for flying debris: It causes the most fatalities and injuries from tornadoes.

Tornado Facts

- A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes can also accompany hurricanes and tropical storms. **They may strike quickly with little or no warning.**
- The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 miles per hour but they may vary from stationary to 70 miles per hour. Rotating winds can reach 300 miles per hour but **most tornado winds are 100 miles per hour or less.**
- Weak tornadoes often last only a minute before dissipating. Stronger tornadoes may stay on the ground for 30 minutes or more traveling 20 - to 50 miles. Rare, violent tornadoes can last hours and travel hundreds of miles.
- In southern states, peak tornado season is March - May. **In Virginia, July is the most active month for tornadoes.** Most tornado deaths occur in Virginia in the Spring and Fall, when stronger tornadoes are likely to occur.





Tornadoes In The Central Shenandoah Valley Region

June 1911	Staunton and Augusta County
Sept. 1921	Augusta County
May 1929	Bath County
April 1952	Augusta and Rockingham Counties
April 1959	Highland County
Aug. 1960	Rockingham County
Nov. 1963	Augusta County
April 1974	Augusta, Bath, and Highland Counties and the City of Staunton
June 1975	Augusta and Rockbridge Counties
Aug. 1975	Rockingham County
Oct. 1979	Dayton
May 1990	Augusta County
June 1995	Waynesboro and Augusta County
June 1996	Broadway
July 1999	Harrisonburg and Augusta County
May 2003	Augusta County

“The Tri-State Tornado”

On March 18, 1925, the tornado that has the longest track in the United States on record occurred in the Upper Mississippi Valley. The Tri-State Tornado traveled 219 miles and lasted three and a half hours. As a result of this tornado, 695 people were killed and 2000 people were injured.

“Super Tornado Outbreak”

On April 3 - 4, 1974 the worst tornado outbreak occurred in U.S. history. During the outbreak, there were 148 tornadoes, the most recorded tornadoes in a 24 hour period in U.S. history. As a result of the numerous tornadoes, 315 people were killed and 5,484 were injured. In the Central Shenandoah Region, an F1 tornado touched down in Augusta County traveling 18 miles from Westview to Weyers Cave, then to Franks Mill. Strong winds and hail also caused damage to roofs, trees, barns, and out buildings. The roofs of Fort Defiance High School and Staunton’s City Hall were damaged. Extensive wind damage also occurred in Bath and Highland Counties as well. In Bath County, besides other damage, two barns were completely demolished. In Highland County, another possible touch down lifted a building off its foundation.

“Virginia’s Deadliest Tornado Outbreak”

On May 8, 1929, five tornadoes were reported in Virginia that day and there may have been others unreported in remote areas. As a result of this outbreak, 22 people were killed and 150 people were injured. In the Central Shenandoah Valley Region, a tornado struck in Bath and Alleghany Counties in the Cowpasture Valley around 6 p.m. A barn was swept away with a woman who was milking a cow inside. Miraculously, even though she was carried some distance away, she and her six cows were uninjured.

**For more information on how to protect your family,
home and business from disasters contact:**

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Sources: FEMA Publication H-34, Are You Ready: A Guide To Citizen Preparedness
Virginia Tornadoes by Barbara McNaught Watson, National Weather Service