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Tornadoes

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms, with whirling winds that can reach 300 mph. Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long. Tornadoes are no strangers to Massachusetts, where we experience a few small tornadoes annually. People of this area have experienced the destruction of the infamous Worcester Tornado, which swept through Central Massachusetts in June of 1953. It was 'on the ground' for 1 hour and 24 minutes, traversing 46 miles and measured almost one mile wide at times. Ninety-four people were killed and over 1,200 were seriously injured. The total cost of damage was estimated at \$53,000,000, as 640 homes were destroyed, with an additional 3,700 damaged.

Before a Tornado threatens

- Know the terms used by meteorologists:
 1. Tornado Watch – Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Listen to the Media for updates.
 2. Tornado Warning – A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.
 3. Fujita-Pearson Tornado Scale:
 - F-0: 40-72mph; chimney damage, tree branches broken
 - F-1: 73-112mph; mobile homes pushed off foundations/overturned
 - F-2: 113-157mph; considerable damage, demolished mobile homes, uprooted trees
 - F-3: 158-205mph; roofs/walls torn down, cars thrown, trains overturned
 - F-4: 207-260mph; well-constructed walls leveled
 - F-5: 261-318mph; homes lifted off foundations/carried considerable distances
- Ask your local Emergency Management Office about the tornado threat in your area, the community warning signals and locations of Public Shelters.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a battery backup and tone-alert feature, as well as a battery-powered commercial radio and extra batteries.
- Determine locations to seek shelter, such as a basement or storm cellar. If an underground location is not available, identify an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor.
- Practice going to your shelter with your household.
- Know locations of designated shelters in places where your family spends time such as public buildings, nursing homes, shopping centers and schools.
- Assemble your family's Disaster Supply Kit. (See)
- Make a record of your personal property, taking photographs/video of your belongings. Store these documents in a safe place.

During a Tornado Watch

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or commercial Media for updates.
- Be alert for approaching storm, particularly revolving funnel-shaped cloud. Other tornado danger signs include a dark, almost greenish sky; large hail; a large, dark, low-lying cloud; or a loud roar, similar to a freight train.
- Be warned that sometimes tornadoes develop so rapidly; there is no visible advanced warning.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as an auditorium, cafeteria, supermarket or shopping mall.
- Be prepared to take shelter immediately. Gather household members, pets and Disaster Supplies.

During a Tornado Warning

- In a residence or small building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement or storm cellar. If there is none, go to an interior room on the lower level (Closet, interior hallway). Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to cover your head and neck.
- Do not open windows. Use the time to seek shelter.
- Go to the center of the room, avoiding the corners, which attract debris.
- In large public buildings, go to predetermined shelter areas. Interior hallways on the lowest floor are usually safest. Stay away from windows and open spaces.
- In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest possible floor.
- Get out of vehicles, trailers and mobile homes immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building. Never try to outrun a tornado in a congested area.
- If caught outside with no shelter, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the potential of flooding.

- Do not go under a bridge or overpass. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Watch out for flying debris from tornadoes, the cause of most fatalities and injuries.

After a Tornado

- Listen to the Media for the latest emergency information.
- Be aware of broken glass and downed power lines.
- Help injured or trapped persons. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury.
- Stay out of damaged buildings, returning only when authorities deem it safe.
- Use the telephone only in emergencies.
- Leave the area if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take photographs/video of the damage for insurance purposes.
- Remember to help your neighbors, particularly those who may require special assistance.

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