

# Safety Circular

May 2026

## BE PREPARED FOR A TORNADO

**Tornadoes** are violently rotating columns of air with circulation that reaches the ground. Tornadoes usually start as a funnel cloud and are accompanied by a loud, roaring noise.

**Tornado Danger Signs:** Tornadoes may develop from thunderstorms when warm moist air is in advance of eastward-moving cold fronts. Watch for skies that turn suddenly dark and greenish ( a phenomenon caused by hail) and with increasing wind speeds, and keep a particular lookout for the formation of funnel clouds.

- **Large Hail:** Tornadoes are spawned from powerful thunderstorms that often produce large hail.
- **Calm before the Storm:** Often just prior to tornado touchdowns, the winds may die down and the air may become very still, clear, and sunlit skies are not uncommon behind a tornado.
- **Clouds of Debris:** Approaching debris clouds can mark a tornado's location, even if a funnel is not visible.
- **Funnel Clouds:** A visible rotating extension of the cloud base is a sign that a tornado may develop.
- **Roaring Noise:** High winds can cause a roaring sound often compared with a passing freight train.



### Tornado Terminology

**Tornado Watch:** Weather conditions could lead to the formation of severer storms and tornadoes.

**BE PREPARED,** know your safe location. Be ready to act quickly if a Warning is issued or you suspect a tornado is approaching.

**Tornado Warning:** A tornado has been spotted or indicated by weather radar, meaning a tornado is occurring or expected soon **TAKE ACTION**, there is imminent danger ort life and property. Immediately seek refuge in the safest location possible.

**Tornado Emergency:** An exceedingly rare situation with a severe threat to human life and catastrophic damage due to a confirmed violent tornado. **TAKE ACTION**, three is imminent danger to life property. Immediately seek refuge in the safest location possible.

### Typical Damage

**Light damage**– damage to chimneys; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over; sign boards damage.

**Moderate damage**- Peels surface off frame houses; mobile homes pushed off foundations or overturned; moving autos blown off roads.

**Considerable damage**– roofs torn off frame housed; mobile home demolished; boxcars overturned; large tress snapped or uprooted; light-object missile generated' cars lifted off ground.

**Severe damage**– roofs and some walls turn off well-constructed housed; trains overturned; most trees in forest uprooted; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown.

**Devastating damage**– structures with weak foundations blown away, cars thrown and large missiles generated.

**Incredible damage**– Strong houses and cars swept away.

## Tornado and Road Safety

### **In a Car or Truck:**

Vehicle are extremely dangerous in a tornado. If the tornado is visible, far away, and the traffic is light, you may be able to drive away from its path by moving at right angles to the tornado. Otherwise, park the car as quickly and safely as possible-out of the traffic lanes. Avoid seeking shelter under bridges, which can accelerate the wind while offering little protection against flying debris.

### **In the open outdoors:**

If possible, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If not, lie flat and face-down on low ground, protection the back of your head with your arms. Get as far away from trees and cars as you can; they may be blown on you in a tornado.

### **In a Shopping Mall, Large Store or Stadium:**

Listen for instruction from building security. Watch for others. Move as quickly as possible to an interior bathroom, storage room or other small enclosed area, away from windows. Move away from any glass.

### **In a Church or Theater:**

If possible, move quickly but orderly to an interior bathroom or hallway, away from windows. Crouch face-down and protect your head with your arms. If there is no time to do that, get under the seats or pews, protecting your head with your arms or hands.



## Plan Ahead

### **Create a tornado emergency plan:**

- Identify a safe place in your home for household members, and pets to gather during a tornado.
- Make sure everyone at home understands the tornado warning system in your area.

- Teach your family how to administer basic first aid, how to use a fire extinguisher, and how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity in your home.
- Know emergency telephone numbers (such as police, fire, paramedics, and medical centers)
- Keep available names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your insurance agents, including policy types and numbers
- Important medical information (for example, allergies, regular medications, and brief medical history)
- Safeguard telephone numbers for your bank or credit union, and your account numbers.

## Store important documents in a secure location:

1. Birth Certificates
2. Ownership certificates (for example, autos or boats)
3. Pet registrations or other proof of ownership
4. Passports
5. Medical documents
6. Social security cards
7. Insurance policies
8. Will
9. Household inventory
10. List of household items and including serial numbers
11. Photos or videos of the contents in each room
12. Photos of high-value items, such as jewelry, paintings, or collection items. vehicle operators by wearing high-visibility clothing, especially in low-light conditions.



## Create an emergency supply kit:

Stock up on emergency supplies that can be used after a tornado. These supplies should include a first aid kit and emergency supply kits for the home and automobile, including emergency water and food. Store enough supplies to last at least 3 days.

## Create a pet disaster preparedness kit if you have pets:

You should include items such as veterinary records; registration information; a 2-week supply of water, food, and medications; a leash; and a pet carrier.

## Arrange and secure household items:

Make sure to inspect your home and its surroundings for any possible hazards and secure them if you can:

- Arrange furniture so that chairs and beds are away from windows, mirrors, and picture frames.
- Place heavy or large items on lower shelves.
- Secure your large appliances, especially your water heater, with flexible cable, braided wire, or metal strapping.
- Identify top-heavy furniture, such as bookcases and China cabinets, that could topple over. Secure them with "L" brackets, corner brackets, aluminum molding, or eyebolts.
- Secure cabinet doors by installing sliding bolts or childproof latches.
- Store hazardous materials such as poisons and solvents in a sturdy, locked cabinet in a well-ventilated area. Keep them away from your emergency food and water supply and out of reach of children and pets.

**Slips, trips, and falls** happen fast so be mindful of your surroundings.

Respond accordingly, and think twice before jumping over debris.

Walk around debris never over it.



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The Safety Circular, a publication of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Risk Management Department, is published monthly in an effort to promote and enhance risk management awareness on issues relating to TDCJ employees. Comments, suggestions and safety related items are welcome.

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