

10 What to do if a tornado hits

Presenter: Welcome to another edition of *What to Do If ...*. Today we'll be talking to Jeff Owens from New Orleans about tornadoes and what to do if they hit your place. So, Jeff, what can you do?

Jeff: Well, to stay safe during a tornado, it would be good if you already had a plan. That means you should know where to go and what to do. My advice is: Build an underground shelter for you and your family. That's the only place offering real safety in case a tornado hits your house directly. You see, even the best and strongest houses can be destroyed by a strong tornado. The second most important thing is to have an emergency bag. Tornadoes can cause a lot of damage, not just to your house but to the whole area. For instance, you might be without electricity or without drinking water for quite some time. So putting aside some fresh batteries and water – and of course food – is a wise thing to do. You should also make sure that you can communicate with the outside world.

Presenter: So you can call for help in case you can't get out of your house or your shelter?

Jeff: Absolutely. Even if you have a good shelter, you might have problems getting out, for instance if stones or fallen trees block the exit, and it's important that you can listen to reports on the radio or TV or on the internet so you know what's going on.

Presenter: But how do I know that a tornado is coming?

Jeff: First thing, if you know it's tornado season, stay tuned to the weather forecast or have a tornado warning app installed on your cell phone. Second, please remember that tornadoes might come out of the blue, so there might be no warning at all. Therefore, it's good to watch the sky for signs of a coming tornado, like a very dark sky or big black clouds hanging low or loud unusual sounds.

Presenter: What can I do if I'm outside, like coming home from school?

Jeff: Then you should get yourself into a solid building as quickly as possible. If it's a private home, just ring the bell and ask for shelter. If that isn't possible, try to protect your head with whatever you can find. Use your schoolbag if you haven't got anything else.

If your home, or wherever you are, does not have a special shelter, go down into the basement or the lowest floor. Keep away from windows because they might get smashed and you could be hit by broken glass. Cover yourself with anything soft and large, like sleeping bags, the mattress from a bed and so on, to avoid injuries by things flying around or falling down on you. For more protection hide under a table or something strong.

Presenter: Would I be safe in a car?

Jeff: Not really. Actually, if a tornado hits you with full power, it might lift up the car and you could get seriously injured. So hiding in a car is not a good option. Neither is it to try and use a car in order to escape from a tornado. The tornado is faster and will catch up with you sooner or later.

Presenter: I understand. Now what about when the tornado has gone? Are there things people need to watch out for?

Jeff: Oh yes, there are. First of all, be careful when you leave your shelter. There might be broken glass or similar things lying around, buildings might fall even when the tornado is gone, and there is great danger coming from electricity and gas.

Presenter: So I shouldn't light a fire or a candle?

Jeff: Definitely not. No open fire. Otherwise you might actually cause an explosion. And just one more thing: You should also be careful with the water. It might not be good to drink anymore, so if in doubt, drink bottled

water only. And last but not least: Stay tuned to your local radio or the internet so you know what is going on in your neighborhood.

Presenter: Thank you very much, Jeff, for all the valuable information.

Jeff: Thanks for having me.

Presenter: Right then. That was it for today. See you next week. Bye for now.