

**Joint Statement on Tornado Safety**  
**By the American Red Cross and the National Weather Service**

The National Weather Service and the American Red Cross share a common goal of protecting lives through public education. Regarding tornado safety, we both agree that the best options are to go to an underground shelter, basement or safe room. We have been giving this advice for decades, and it is recognized as the most effective way to stay safe in a tornado.

The National Weather Service and Red Cross also agree on the critical importance of preparedness and quick action when conditions are right for tornadoes to develop like during a severe thunderstorm warning or tornado watch. When a tornado warning is issued, immediate action is required. Preparedness begins by identifying a safe location well in advance of any severe weather and having a way to get weather alerts wherever you are, such as from a NOAA weather radio. When a watch or warning is broadcast, people should already have a plan on what to do and where to go. They should take action immediately and never wait until they actually see a tornado.

The National Weather Service and the Red Cross continue to agree that if no underground shelter or safe room is available, the safest alternative is a small windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building, such as an interior bathroom. We also recommend that residents of mobile homes go to the nearest sturdy building or shelter if a tornado threatens.

The Red Cross and Weather Service believe that if you are caught outdoors, you should seek shelter in a basement, shelter or sturdy building. If you cannot quickly walk to a shelter:

- Immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter.
- If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. Now you have the following options as a last resort:
  - Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.
  - If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.
- Your choice should be driven by your specific circumstances.

The important thing to understand is that if you find yourself outside or in a car with a tornado approaching and you are unable to get to a safe shelter, you are at risk from a number of things outside your control, such as the strength and path of the tornado and debris from your surroundings. This is the case whether you stay in your car or seek shelter in a depression or ditch, both of which are considered last resort options that provide little protection. The safest place to be is in an underground shelter, basement or safe room.

The American Red Cross and the National Weather Service are working to ensure that our publications are updated to reflect this new tornado safety messaging. These changes were formulated using evidence-based research. The American Red Cross and the National Weather Service will continue to work together to assess new research findings and future improvements to our Nation's tornado safety messaging.

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