

Preparing for Tornadoes

On 19 April, a severe weather event passed through our area that created numerous tornadoes. As of 22 April, the National Weather Service (NWS) has identified 15 confirmed tornadoes across Virginia. Locations include York County and City of Newport News. The complete list and details of each event, the location, direction, estimated peak winds, strength, etc., can be found at the NWS Wakefield web site at https://www.weather.gov/akq/April_19_2019_TornadoSummary_Statewide



Peak tornado season in Virginia takes place from May to September, however, tornadoes can occur any time of the year. Please ensure your family is prepared for these severe weather events. The below information is from the FEMA fact sheet on Tornadoes.

Know Your Risk and What To Do

- Inquire about emergency plans and procedures at your child's school and at your workplace.
- Make a family disaster plan that includes out-of-town contacts and locations to reunite if you become separated. Be sure everyone knows home, work and cell phone numbers, and how to call 9-1-1.
- Assemble a 3-day disaster supplies kit with food, water, medical supplies, battery-powered radio and NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, batteries, flashlights and other items.
- Gather important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial and insurance records. Store them in a fire and flood safe location or safe deposit box.

Before a Tornado

- Be alert to changing weather conditions.
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information. A properly set weather radio will alert you to any emergency notifications in your area.
- Remember that a Tornado Watch means tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, commercial radio, or television for information. A Tornado Warning means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.
- Look for approaching storms.
- Look for the following danger signs: Dark, often greenish sky; Large hail; A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating); Loud roar, similar to a freight train
- If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.

During a Tornado

- If you are under a tornado WARNING, seek shelter immediately!
- If you are inside, go to the safe place you picked to protect yourself from glass and other flying objects. The tornado may be approaching your area.

- If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a dry ditch or low-lying area.
- If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for safety (as above).

After a Tornado

- Watch out for fallen power lines and stay out of the damaged area.
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
- Use a flashlight to inspect your home for damage; do not use candles at any time.
- Report power outages, damaged power lines/pad mounted transformers, damaged gas lines, trees blocking roads, etc...

For more information, go to the VDEM website that addresses tornado preparedness at <https://www.vaemergency.gov/prepare-recover/threat/prepare-recover/threats/tornadoes/>

Submitted by Lou Lafrenaye