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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TORNADO WARNINGS: KNOW HOW TO STAY SAFE

Before a warning is issued or a funnel is sighted, know how to stay safe during a storm.

No one wants to be caught away from safe shelter when a tornado strikes but knowing what to do if this scenario occurs will likely save your life.

The first step to staying safe is understanding these severe weather terms (<https://weather.com>):

Severe thunderstorm watch: Conditions are conducive to the development of severe thunderstorms in and around the watch area. These storms produce hail of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter and/or wind gusts of at least 58 mph.

Severe thunderstorm warning: Issued when a severe thunderstorm has been observed by spotters or indicated on radar and is occurring or imminent in the warning area. These warnings usually last for a period of 30 to 60 minutes .

Tornado watch: Conditions are favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms and multiple tornadoes in and around the watch area. People in the affected areas are encouraged to be vigilant in preparation for severe weather.

Tornado warning: Spotters have sighted a tornado, or one has been indicated on radar, and is occurring or imminent in the warning area. When a tornado warning has been issued, people in the affected area are strongly encouraged to take cover immediately.

Tornado emergency: A tornado warning that carries with it a “tornado emergency” is the rarest and is reserved for the direst of situations. This is only issued “when there is a severe threat to human life and catastrophic damage from an imminent or ongoing tornado (National Weather Service).”

If you are in an open area and have no opportunity to reach a building for safety, don't seek shelter under a highway overpass.

According to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association) and the Red Cross, "Highway overpasses are NOT tornado shelters, and these should be avoided. Ditches, culverts, and ravines should be used only as an absolute last resort. You will be exposed to flying debris, rain and hail, lightning, and extreme wind."

A safer course of action is to carefully monitor weather conditions anytime you are in a remote area away from home or other safe buildings. If you spot a tornado or are in the path of a tornado that's been verified to be on the ground, head for a sturdy shelter as quickly as possible.

Along a roadway, safety may be found at a truck stop, convenience store, restaurant, or even a walk-in cooler. Once inside a sturdy shelter, go to the basement if possible. If there is no basement, go to the center of the building in a hallway or a room without windows. Keep in mind that the Red Cross notes a mobile home is a high-risk structure during a tornado. Your vehicle will be safer than the mobile home.

Whenever possible, get out of the path of the tornado and take the safest shelter until it passes. If you see the tornado in the distance and can determine its movement, drive at a right angle to that movement. For example, if it's heading east, drive to the south.

If you find yourself without a safe place to go other than your vehicle, leave the vehicle and get as far away from it as possible. If the storm is so close you don't have time to leave your vehicle, the National Weather Service (NWS) recommends keeping your seat belt in place, bending down below the windshield and windows, and covering your head with a blanket or something similar.

NOAA explains that, under an overpass, storm winds are actually higher. Debris is also just as likely to harm you in that location. If flying debris takes out the vehicle windshield or windows, there is a risk of being blown out of the car by high winds.

If multiple vehicles crowd under an overpass, it may prevent emergency vehicles from reaching affected areas. The blocked traffic could also cut off potential escape routes if the tornado approaches.

Inside a building, always stay as far away from windows as possible. Whether or not there's a tornado, high wind or hail could shatter the window and result in serious injury.

The safest place during a severe storm is underground in a basement or storm shelter. If that's not possible, put as many walls as possible between yourself and the storm. Often, during severe storms, while outer walls are destroyed, inner rooms remain somewhat intact.

At home, put on your shoes because you may have to walk through debris to reach help or shelter once the storm is over. When a tornado destroys a building, debris includes nails, glass shards, and splintered wood.

If you own a bike helmet, put it on as it could protect you from life-threatening injury if the tornado strikes your home.

During a storm, keep your pets on a leash or in a carrier and keep them in your sheltered area. Ensure that collars are on so identification can be made as necessary. If your pet isn't in a crate, keep them on a leash. If a building is destroyed by a storm, the pet may not recognize their home and could escape your grasp. If they're present during any cleanup, keep them in a crate or a safe place.

If you're at home when a tornado warning is sounded, don't attempt to leave. Traffic jams could prevent you from moving away from the storm's path, or the storm could veer off from its path and quickly put you in harm's way.

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