

Severe Weather



Severe weather can occur anywhere and at anytime. The City of Odessa and Odessa Fire/Rescue Office of Emergency Management urges citizens to be prepared in the event of severe weather in the area. All citizens should have personal disaster plan for the event of a serious emergency. Family members may not all be in the same place when disasters strike, so it is important to ensure your family and friends know what to do when the threat of a disaster is nearby or directly impacts your community. Make sure you establish plans to address communications, have an emergency kit, and make other necessary preparations that will assist in keeping you safe.



Tornado Safety Tips

More tornadoes strike Texas than any other state. They can occur at any time of year, including winter, but are most frequent from mid-March through May. They are also common during hurricanes. To prepare for these violent storms, there are several precautions you can take:

- Seek shelter in an interior room on the lowest floor of your home, such as a bathroom, closet or room without windows. Cover yourself with a mattress or cushions.
- In an office building, go to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor.
- If you are in a mobile home, get out and take shelter in a nearby building. If there are none, lie flat in a ditch or ravine.
- Never stay inside a car. Get out and lie flat in a ditch or a ravine. If a building is nearby, take shelter inside. Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car.
- At school, follow plans and go to a designated shelter area, usually interior hallways on the lowest floor. Avoid auditoriums, gyms and areas with wide, free-span roofs.
- In a shopping center, move towards the interior away from exterior glass walls.
- If you are in open country, take cover in a low spot away from trees.
- Learn the difference between a Tornado Watch and a Tornado Warning. A Tornado Watch means watch the sky. A Tornado Warning means a tornado is on the ground and you must seek shelter immediately.

SOURCE: Texas Division of Emergency Management





How do I prepare for a tornado before it strikes?

Inspect your home Make an inspection of your home, paying close attention to the walls and roof. You may need to make some improvements such as bolting the walls to the foundation or attaching “hurricane clips” between wall studs and roof rafters. Use the “Home Inspection Checklist” provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a guide.

Prepare a shelter If your home does not have a basement or storm cellar, locate the safest room in your house and designate it as your storm shelter. An interior room without windows such as a closet, bathroom or the crawl space under a staircase may be the safest place. Mobile homes – even those with tie-downs – are not safe during tornadoes. If you live in a mobile home, plan to shelter in a nearby sturdy building. If one does not exist, find a low spot outside, such as a ditch, and plan to go there during tornado warnings. Lie flat on the ground and cover your head with your hands.

Safe Rooms Building a safe room is another option. Safe rooms are above-ground shelters built to withstand tornado-force winds and flying debris. An existing room, such as an interior bathroom, can be reinforced to function as a safe room while remaining functional as a bathroom. Manufactured free-standing safe rooms also are available.

How do I protect myself and my family during tornado threats?

When severe weather is approaching, you may not be able to see funnel clouds, so learn how to look for other weather conditions that may indicate tornadic activity:

- A dark or green-colored sky
- Large, dark, low-lying clouds
- Large hail
- A loud roar that sounds like a freight train

If you see any of these signs, go to your shelter immediately and tune in to local radio, television or get information about NOAA Weather Radio. Help alert others by reporting tornado sightings to the media.

The City of Odessa Office of Emergency Management highly encourages the local citizens to invest in a weather radio receiver. Weather radios generally air both normal and emergency weather information. If the radio is off or tuned to another band, it automatically turns on and goes to the weather band for emergency weather information.

- **In your car.** If you see a tornado while you are driving, stop your car and get out. Find the lowest spot, such as a ditch, and lie flat on the ground. Cover your head with your hands. Do not seek shelter beneath overpasses as wind speeds can be higher in narrow passages. Never try to out-drive a tornado.
- **At school, the office or shopping centers** In schools and office buildings, go to a designated shelter. If there is not one, the safest place is the basement or an interior hallway on the lowest floor. In shopping centers, move as far away from glass doors and windows as possible. If you are in a building with a large-span roof, such as a gymnasium or auditorium, seek shelter elsewhere.

SOURCE: Texas Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency preparedness starts in the home.

The day of a disaster is not the time to think about disaster planning.

- Be informed
- Have a plan
- Build a kit
- Get involved



Links

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/Preparedness/tips/tornadoSafetyTips.htm>

<http://texasprepares.org/English/information-tornadoes.shtml>

www.texasprepares.org

www.ready.gov

<http://www.weather.gov/>