

Tornadoes Can Strike At Any Time

Everyone looks forward to the sunny days and blue skies that summer brings! Many churches plan fun outdoor activities for their congregations; during COVID-19, gathering in small groups outdoors may be the best option provided there is plenty of space to socially distance and maintain proper safety protocols. Whether your church is planning an activity outdoors or indoors, it is always beneficial to have a plan in place should a tornado be indicated for your area. Insurance Board recommends your congregation revisit your plan to consider how to implement proper safety protocols for COVID-19 should a tornado occur.

Know how to stay informed. Receiving timely information about weather conditions or other emergency events can make all the difference in knowing when to take action. Monitor weather reports. Many communities have text or email alert systems for emergency notifications. To find out what alerts are available in your area, do an internet search with your town/city/county name and “alerts.”

Create a Tornado Emergency Plan

- ◇ Review the floor plan of your buildings and walk through each room to discuss where and how to seek shelter.
- ◇ Show a second way to exit from each room or area. If you need special equipment, such as a rope ladder, mark where it is located.
- ◇ Make sure everyone understands the siren warning system, if there's such a system in your area.
- ◇ Mark where your first aid kit and fire extinguishers are located and communicate its location.
- ◇ Mark where the utility switches or valves are located so they can be turned off—if time permits—in an emergency.
- ◇ Any person given the responsibility of overseeing activities should know how to administer basic first aid, how to use a fire extinguisher, and how and when to turn off water, gas, and electricity in your church.
- ◇ See [FEMA](#) for more information on identifying a proper pre-designated area to take shelter.

Assemble a Disaster Emergency Kit for Your Church

- ◇ Keep several cases of bottled water on hand should people need to remain sheltered at church
- ◇ Keep a supply of non-perishable food (and a can opener)
- ◇ Think about how you will stay informed if there is a power outage; extra batteries for a battery-operated radio and your cell phone.
- ◇ Flashlights and batteries that are specifically designated for the Disaster Emergency Kit
- ◇ First aid kit (bandages, gauze, tweezers, disinfectant, gloves, pain relievers, thermometer, etc.)
- ◇ Whistle to signal for help
- ◇ Ample supply of disposable masks and dust masks to prevent inhalation of dust particles
- ◇ Ample supply of hand sanitizer
- ◇ Survival blankets (also known as a space blankets)
- ◇ Pocket knife
- ◇ Wrench and tools needed to turn off utilities
- ◇ Local maps for evacuation
- ◇ Extra clothes and rain ponchos

According to the National Weather Service

Tornado Watch: Be Prepared! Tornadoes are possible in and near the area. Review and discuss your emergency plans. Check supplies and your safe room. Be ready to act quickly if a warning is issued or you suspect a tornado is approaching. Watches are issued by the [Storm Prediction Center](#) for counties where tornadoes may occur. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

Tornado Warning: Take Action! A tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar. There is imminent danger to life and property. Move to an interior room on the lowest floor of a sturdy building. Avoid windows. Warnings are issued by your [local forecast office](#). Warnings typically encompass a smaller area (city or county) that may be impacted by a tornado identified by a forecaster on [radar](#) or by a [trained spotter](#)/law enforcement who is watching the storm.

For more detailed information, see the National Weather Service's Tornado Preparedness Guide

<https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado-during>