

# HOW TO SURVIVE A TORNADO!

## TORNADO WATCH:

Tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

## TORNADO WARNING:

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar - take necessary precautions at once!



## Prediction Experiment

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Researchers, scientists and forecasters gathered at the National Weather Center on Friday to complete preparations for an \$11.9 million project being touted as the largest ever attempt to study tornadoes.

The initial phase of the Verification of Rotation in Tornadoes Experiment 2 — also called Vortex2 — will start Sunday and run through June 13. A second phase will run from May 1 through June 15 next year.

During the study, researchers hope to sample supercell thunderstorms in an effort to learn more about how tornadoes form and the damage that they can cause.

Joshua Wurman, the president of the Center for Severe Weather Research in Boulder, Colo., and one of the project's lead principal investigators, said the goal is to eventually improve lead times on tornado warnings to the public. The average warning time nationally is 13 minutes, he said.

"If we can increase that lead time from 13 minutes to half an hour, then the average person at home could do something different," Wurman said.

More than 120 scientists and crew members traveling in about 40 vehicles will follow storms in a 900-mile area that includes western and central Oklahoma, southeastern South Dakota, western Iowa, eastern Colorado, far northwestern Missouri, far southwestern Minnesota, most of Ne-

braska and Kansas and the Texas Panhandle.

The experiment will be based out of the National Weather Center in Norman.

Weather equipment to be deployed during the study will include multiple types of radar, mobile mesonets, mobile ballooning systems, unmanned aircraft, tornado pods and particle probes.

"We're throwing everything but the kitchen sink at it," Wurman said. "Almost anything you can imagine we're trying to use to observe these storms, all different directions in all different ways."

The project is being funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Science Foundation, 10 universities and three nonprofit organizations.

Brad Small, the associate director of the physical and dynamic meteorology program within the NSF's Division of Atmospheric Sciences in Arlington, Va., called the experiment an unprecedented collaboration.

"We're not only addressing the problems at hand, we're also educating the future generation of scientists," Small said.

One of that generation is 25-year-old Alex Gibbs, a graduate student at the University of Nebraska. Gibbs will be part of team driving a vehicle with tornado pods, which are used to measure wind velocity and direction and ground level, ideally in the core flow of a tornado.

"If you're interested in severe weather, this is the only way to study," Gibbs said. "It's a good way to put everything you've learned to use."

The original Vortex program operated in the central Great Plains during 1994 and 1995 and documented the entire life cycle of a tornado for the first time.

Don Burgess, a retired federal research meteorologist who now works part-time with the University of Oklahoma's Cooperative Institute for Mesoscale Meteorological Studies, said that study helped improve the so-called "false alarm" ratio of National Weather Service's severe weather warning statistics by 10 percent.

During Vortex2, meteorologists at the National Weather Center will pass along forecast information to scientists in the field, who then will decide where their convoy will head for the day. While gathering storm information, the crews in the field also will pass along real-time information to local National Weather Service offices.

"Even though this field phase seems to be the most spectacular and seems like it's a lot of work, by far the majority of what we're doing is when we go back to our labs, when we work with each other, when we work with our students to try to figure out just what is it that we've collected," Wurman said. "It's going to take years to digest this data and to really get the benefit of this."

## Be Alert for Warning Signs

Each year about a thousand tornadoes touch down in the US. Only a small percentage actually strike occupied buildings, but every year a number of people are killed or injured. The chances that a tornado will strike a building that you are in are very small, however, and you can greatly reduce the chance of injury by doing a few simple things.

One of the most important things you can do to prevent being injured in a tornado is to be ALERT to the onset of severe weather. Most deaths and injuries happen to people who are unaware and uninformed. Young children or the mentally challenged may not recognize a dangerous situation. The ill, elderly, or invalid may not be able to reach shelter in time.

If you don't regularly watch or listen to the weather report, but strange clouds start moving in and the weather begins to look stormy, turn to the local radio or television station to get the weather forecast.

Check The Weather Channel for

additional information, or if you have trouble getting up-to-the-minute forecasts on a regular radio, then a "NOAA weather radio" is a wise investment.

If a tornado "watch" is issued for your area, it means that a tornado is "possible."

If a tornado "warning" is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been spotted, or is strongly indicated on radar, and it is time to go to a safe shelter immediately.

Be alert to what is happening outside as well. Here are some of the things that people describe when they tell about a tornado experience:

- A sickly greenish or greenish black color to the sky.
- If there is a watch or warning posted, then the fall of hail should be considered as a real danger sign. Hail can be common in some areas, however, and usually has no tornadic activity along with it.
- A strange quiet that occurs within or shortly after the thunderstorm.
- Clouds moving by very fast,

especially in a rotating pattern or converging toward one area of the sky.

- A sound a little like a waterfall or rushing air at first, but turning into a roar as it comes closer.
- Debris dropping from the sky.

- An obvious "funnel-shaped" cloud that is rotating, or debris such as branches or leaves being pulled upwards, even if no funnel cloud is visible.

If you see a tornado and it is not moving to the right or to the left relative to trees or power poles in the distance, it may be moving towards you! Remember that although tornadoes usually move from southwest to northeast, they also move towards the east, the southeast, the north, and even northwest.

Encourage your family members to plan for their own safety in many different locations. It is important to make decisions about the safest places well BEFORE you ever have to go to them.



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## Think you're prepared for the storm?

### Before the storm

**Reconsider your coverage:**

- Not all policies cover water damage, debris or tree removal, sewer backup due to flooding, sump pump failure or the costs of having to stay somewhere while your home is repaired.
- Do you have comprehensive coverage on your vehicle in case of hail?
- Did you add flood insurance (a FEMA-run program) to your homeowners' policy?
- Have you updated your home inventory?



### After the storm

**Claims, repairs and settlements:**

- Contact your agent immediately to report losses, and take notes about your conversation.
- Take photos of damage.
- Get instructions from your adjuster before making repair arrangements.
- Don't get scammed by questionable contractors.
- Don't accept an unfair settlement. If you can't reach a settlement with your insurance company, call our Consumer Assistance Hotline at **800-432-2484**.

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