

Wild weather reminds us to be prepared

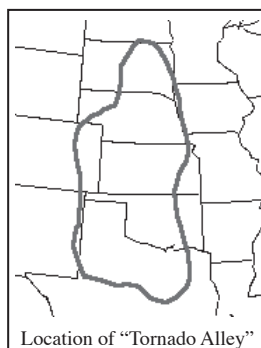
The weekend of April 13, 2012, was a horrific time many of us won't soon forget. More than 130 tornadoes were spotted across America's midsection that weekend alone, with the majority of them being in Kansas.

"Tornado Alley", the area of the United States that is known for tornadoes, was given the warning by the Storm Prediction Center more than

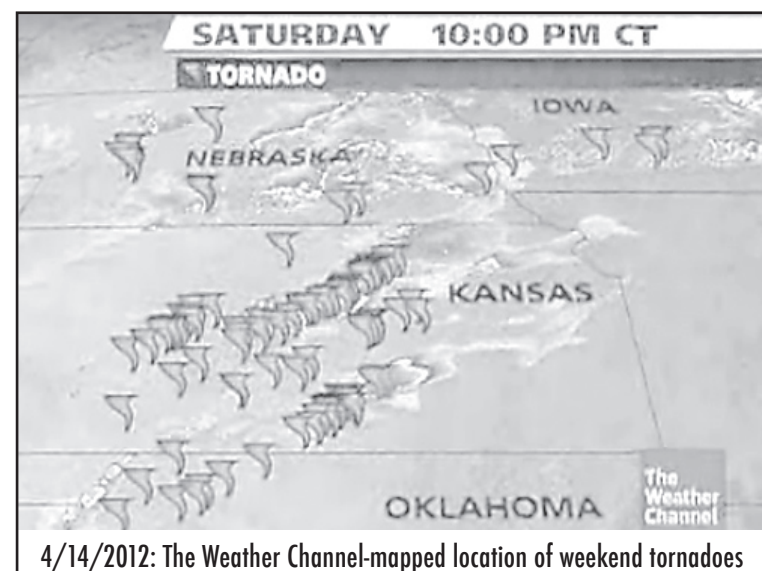
24 hours in advance that the weekend was going to be violent, even "life-changing". This was only the second time in history that the high-risk warning had been given in advance.

The National Weather Service announced last month that it would start using terms

like "mass devastation," "unsurvivable" and "catastrophic" in severe weather warnings to get more people to take heed. Six people in Woodward, Oklahoma did end up losing their lives, but the toll could have been much higher across the extended area if not for the advanced warnings.



Location of "Tornado Alley"



4/14/2012: The Weather Channel-mapped location of weekend tornadoes

Tornado survival Need-to-know

WHEN A TORNADO IS NEAR

WORST PLACE TO BE: NEAR WINDOWS

SAFEST PLACE TO BE: BASEMENT



1. Prepare for tornadoes by gathering emergency supplies including food, water, medications, batteries, flashlights, etc.. It is important for your family to have an emergency plan ready, and everyone knows where to go and what to do.
2. When a tornado approaches, anyone in its path should take shelter indoors, preferably in a basement or an interior first-floor room or hallway.
3. Avoid windows and seek additional protection by getting underneath large, solid pieces of furniture.
4. Avoid automobiles and mobile homes, which provide almost no protection from tornadoes.
5. Those caught outside should lie flat in a depression or on other low ground and wait for the storm to pass.

Enhanced Fujita Scale

EF-Scale:	Old F-Scale:	Typical Damage:
EF-0 (65-85 mph)	F0 (65-73 mph)	Light damage. Peels surface off some roofs; some damage to gutters or siding; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over.
EF-1 (86-110 mph)	F1 (73-112 mph)	Moderate damage. Roofs severely stripped; mobile homes overturned or badly damaged; loss of exterior doors; windows and other glass broken.
EF-2 (111-135 mph)	F2 (113-157 mph)	Considerable damage. Roofs torn off well-constructed houses; foundations of frame homes shifted; mobile homes completely destroyed; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated; cars lifted off ground.
EF-3 (136-165 mph)	F3 (158-206 mph)	Severe damage. Entire stories of well-constructed houses destroyed; severe damage to large buildings such as shopping malls; trains overturned; trees debarked; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown; structures with weak foundations blown away some distance.
EF-4 (166-200 mph)	F4 (207-260 mph)	Devastating damage. Whole frame houses well-constructed houses and whole frame houses completely leveled; cars thrown and small missiles generated.
EF-5 (>200 mph)	F5 (261-318 mph)	Incredible damage. Strong frame houses leveled off foundations and swept away; automobile-sized missiles fly through the air in excess of 100 m (109 yd); high-rise buildings have significant structural deformation; incredible phenomena will occur.
EF No rating	F6-F12 (319 mph to speed of sound)	Inconceivable damage. Should a tornado with the maximum wind speed in excess of EF-5 occur, the extent and types of damage may not be conceived. A number of missiles such as iceboxes, water heaters, storage tanks, automobiles, etc. will create serious secondary damage on structures.

The terms listed to the left may sound all too scary to those in Tornado Alley. The chart is known as the Enhanced Fujita Scale, which is used to rate the strength of tornadoes and the damage caused by them.

It was first implemented in 1971 and simply known as the Fujita Scale, but underwent some changes in February 2007, which is why it is now known as the Enhanced Fujita Scale.

On the revised scale, the first time the EF5 assessment was used was the Greensburg, Kansas tornado that occurred on May 4, 2007.

Important warning signs

Be alert to changing weather conditions. Look for approaching storms and be aware of 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.

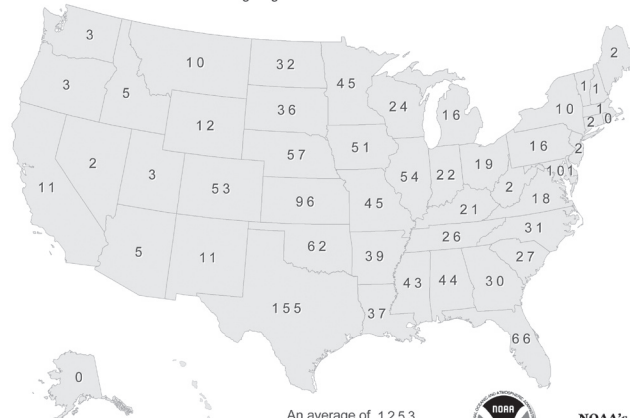
If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take

shelter immediately.



Average Annual Number of Tornadoes

Averaging Period: 1991 - 2010

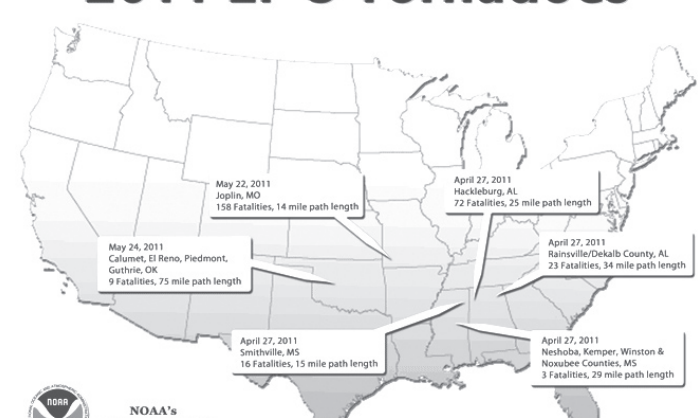


An average of 1253 tornadoes occur in the United States each year

NOAA's National Climatic Data Center

Charts courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Climatic Data Center

2011 EF-5 Tornadoes



Please stay safe this storm season!

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We urge you to call **911** if you spot dangerous weather.

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Please stay safe this storm season!

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