



Severe Weather Safety

The information below is provided by the Farmington Hills Fire Department in an effort to help you understand local severe storm and tornado activity.

What is a tornado and how do they form? A tornado is a column of violently rotating winds extending down from a thunderstorm cloud touching the surface of the earth. A tornado spins like a top and may sound like an airplane or a train. Before thunderstorms develop, a change in wind direction and an increase in wind speed, with increasing height, create an invisible, horizontal spinning effect in the lower atmosphere. Rising air within the thunderstorm's updraft tilts the rotating air from horizontal to vertical.

When do tornadoes generally occur? Most tornadoes occur from April through August during the late afternoon and evening hours. However, tornadoes can occur any time of the day or night in almost any month of the year.

Can there be a tornado after dark? Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 and 9 p.m., but have been known to occur at all hours of the day or night.

How many tornadoes usually occur in Michigan every year? An average of 18 tornadoes occur in Michigan every year. Since 1950, 239 people have been killed due to tornadoes. During the same time, Michigan has experienced 772 tornadoes.

What is a Tornado Warning? A tornado has been sighted or is strongly indicated by radar. Seek shelter immediately and listen to the radio or television for additional information.

What is a Tornado Watch? Weather includes the large hail and damaging wind threats, as well as the possibility of multiple tornadoes. A Tornado Watch is issued to alert people to the possibility of a tornado developing in your area. At this point, a tornado has not been seen but the conditions are very favorable for tornadoes to occur at any moment. You should be aware of changing weather conditions.

What is the difference between a tornado and a funnel cloud? Much like a tornado, a funnel cloud is also a column of violently rotating winds extending down from a thunderstorm, however it does not touch the ground.

Notification to residents - When the National Weather Service issues a Tornado Warning or a Severe Thunderstorm with damaging winds at or greater than 70 mph for Oakland County, the sirens are activated. This is accomplished in conjunction with local municipal units of government by installing sirens in major population areas.

What should I do if I hear a Local Warning Siren? Seek shelter immediately. In your home: A basement offers the greatest safety. Seek shelter under sturdy furniture if possible. In a home without a basement, take cover in the center of the house on the lowest floor in a small room such as a closet or bathroom or under sturdy furniture. In a manufactured/mobile home or vehicle: Leave and go to a substantial structure before the storm arrives. If there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine or culvert with your hands shielding your head. At work or school:

Follow plans to move to interior hallways or small rooms on the lowest floor. Avoid areas with glass and wide, free-span roofs. (Schools, factories, and office buildings should designate someone to look for severe weather and initiate an alarm.) In open country: If possible, get into a sturdy building, or lie flat in a ditch or depression and hold onto something on the ground.

Do your best to protect yourself and your family. Make certain that authorities are notified that you are a tornado victim. Be prepared to cooperate with trained and authorized officers and volunteers who will arrive to give aid.

It's up to all of us to be a good neighbor - Each year many people are killed or seriously injured by tornadoes or strong winds despite advance warning. Some do not hear the warning, while others may ignore it and do not take action. After you have heard the warning or observed threatening skies you must take action.

Local Warning Sirens

Oakland County has 244 outdoor warning sirens located on fire stations, utility poles or buildings throughout the county. All sirens are activated by transmission of a signal with a tone alert. The signal is transmitted by Oakland County Homeland Security Division from a transmitter located on the County complex at 1200 North Telegraph Road. Each siren has its own receiver and tone decoder.

When sirens are activated a three-minute tone indicates a tornado has been sighted or strongly indicated on radar and/or a severe thunderstorm with 70 mph winds or greater is in the area. Seek shelter immediately and listen to the radio or television for more information. Unless you are injured or truly in need of emergency services, do not call police or fire departments. Consider having your emergency preparedness kit at hand.

Each siren is capable of covering about a one-mile radius from its location. The sirens are designed to alert citizens who are outside, but citizens inside buildings may hear the siren if they are close to the siren location.

Local Warning Siren Testing

The **first Saturday of each month at 1 p.m., with the following exceptions:** December, January, or February. Testing for April will be on April 10 in recognition of Severe Weather Awareness Week instead of April 6. The rest of 2013 will be as follows:

March 2, May 4, June 1, August 3, September 7, October 5, and November 2.

As always, any time that you have a life safety emergency, you should call 911.

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