

Appendix F-4

Sample Tornado Preparedness Guide

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air that extends from a cumuliform cloud to the surface. A tornado can be tens to hundreds of metres wide and have a lifespan of minutes or hours. In terms of size and area, it is one of the least extensive of all storms, but in terms of how violent storms can be, it is the world's most severe. Winds can range from 90 to 315 km/h or greater. Canada has the second highest tornado occurrence rate in the world, behind the United States.

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

What to look for:

- A funnel cloud that extends fully or partially from the cloud to the surface.
- Rotating debris near the ground or a spray near the water surface.
- Sky may be an unusual green colour
- Wind will sound like a freight train.

ENVIRONMENT CANADA WEATHER INFORMATION

What to listen for:

- **Tornado Watch:** A watch issued by Environment Canada's Meteorological Service when severe thunderstorms are forecast, and conditions are favourable for one or more tornadoes to be spawned from those thunderstorms within a defined 'watch' area.

- **Tornado Warning:** A warning issued by Environment Canada’s Meteorological Service when at least one tornado is imminent, as indicated by observation, reports and/or radar scans.
- **Severe Thunderstorm Watch:** Severe thunderstorms are possible in your area.
- **Severe Thunderstorm Warning:** Severe thunderstorms are occurring.

Note: Tornadoes occasionally develop in areas in which a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is in effect. Be vigilant to signs of an approaching tornado.

Severe thunderstorm and tornado watches are often issued several hours in advance of thunderstorm developing. On the other hand, it may be a rapidly developing situation with less than an hour before the storms impact.

ROLE OF TEACHERS, COACHES, INTRAMURAL SUPERVISORS

Prior to outside physical activities, check the weather forecast for severe thunderstorm watches or warnings when appropriate. When outside, watch for identifying features.

Communicate to students severe weather conditions (severe thunderstorms and tornado watches/warnings).

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

AT SCHOOL

- Know the Tornado Safe Areas and communicate to students: MAIN SCHOOL BUILDING – INSIDE HALLWAYS – AT LOWEST LEVEL OF THE BUILDING
- Avoid areas that are not protected by overhead floors and rooms that may have a wide span roof without supports in the middle, making it more likely to collapse if struck by a tornado. For example:

- The gymnasiums, arenas, auditoriums, libraries, portables
- Outside walls, windows, glass doorways.
- Outside areas (for example, during physical activities, recess).
- Communicate the procedures for assisting students with disabilities (for example, wheelchair)
- Communicate the tornado protection position to students:
 - Kneeling on the ground
 - Forehead near floor
 - Hands clasped behind head
- Tornado drills must be conducted as outlined by board/school procedures.
- When severe weather is reported and/or anticipated, activities in gyms (not protected by overhead floors and rooms) or outside should be cancelled/delayed.

OUTDOORS

- When planning outdoor activities (for example, large group/school activities, interschool competitions), listen to the latest weather forecasts (for example, The Weather Channel, local radio/TV stations/websites, The Weather Network, Environment Canada, Weather-One-On-One) and take necessary actions (for example, cancellation) if threatening weather is possible.
- If possible, get inside a well-constructed building. Move to the interior or basement of the building away from windows and doors.

- If a shelter is not available, lie in a nearby ditch or ravine or low lying area (do not go into a grove of trees or under a vehicle).
- Lie flat and protect your body and use arms to protect head and neck.

IN A VEHICLE/BUS

- Never attempt to outrun a tornado.
- If you have the time get to a well constructed building. Move into the interior or basement of the building away from windows and doors.
- If there is no well constructed building available:
 - Get out of your vehicle
 - Do not get under your vehicle
 - Look for ditch or low-lying area (preferably without water) and get into the protective position with hands over the head.

SENDING STUDENTS HOME

Determine when to delay departure of students (for example, at the end of the school day, or after intramural and interschool activities). Whenever there is a 'tornado watch' or 'tornado warning' in effect and/or if there is a possibility that students will be travelling during the storm, hold the departure of students who walk and who take buses until after the storm has passed. Buses "do not provide protection" from severe storms.

Source: Environment Canada, 2017