

HAZARDS AND THREATS

TORNADOES AND TWISTERS – INTRODUCTION

Although tornadoes may occur on rare occasions in the Los Angeles County Operational Area, the region is prone to what is referred to as funnel cloud formation. Some of these funnel clouds may touch ground for a brief moment and cause damage to properties and residencies.

All Los Angeles County residents, renters and business owners who live and work in the identified 137 unincorporated area communities of the County should have an emergency plan and survival kit to guide and sustain them when disasters, natural or otherwise strike. It is highly recommended for families and businesses to make the effort to contact their local government, community and faith-based organizations, State and/or Federal government emergency management, civil defense or preparedness offices as these organizations and others have emergency preparedness information readily available to assist residents, renters and business owners in preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies and/or disasters.

You never know when an emergency and/or disaster will strike. It may happen when you are visiting family members or when you are on vacation.

The following section entitled “Tornadoes and Twisters” will provide you and your loved ones with information on quick facts about tornadoes including learning how to spot a tornado and tornado chasers; know what to do during a tornado; terminology and definitions (Tornado Scale – Fujita-Pearson or F Scale and Enhanced Fujita Scale or EF Scale); what to do to prepare for tornadoes; and the history of past tornadoes, funnel clouds and waterspouts that have impacted the Los Angeles County Operational Area.

Knowing what to do when you see a tornado, or when you hear a tornado warning, can help protect you and your loved ones. During a tornado, people face hazards from extremely high winds and risk of being struck by flying and falling objects. After a tornado, the damage left behind poses additional injury risks. Although nothing can be done to prevent tornadoes, there are actions you can take for your health and safety. Below are some quick facts about tornadoes.

QUICK FACTS

- Tornado is from the Spanish word, “tronada,” meaning thunderstorm.
- Dust Devils are strong tornadoes that pass over the desert.
- The safest place to be during a tornado is underground, which makes basements and cellars the ideal shelters to get away from tornadoes.

- The myth of opening the windows in a house will help prevent a tornado from coming in and being destroyed, is false. In fact, opening the wrong windows could allow air to rush in and blow the house apart from the inside.
- Sometimes multiple tornadoes form and travel together in swarms.
- The most powerful tornadoes occur in the United States.
- A typical tornado only lasts for a few minutes.
- Every tornado has its own color, sound and shape.
- You need to reach more than 70 miles per hour (mph) in order to outrun the fastest tornado.
- The chances of a F5 Tornado, the highest classification of tornado on the Fujita-Pearson (F scale), is less than 0.1%.
- Tornadoes have been reported in every state in the United States and also in every season.
- A tornado can occur at any time, but most often between 3-9 p.m.
- Rescue workers have compared the destruction left behind by a tornado to a bomb blast.
- It is not rare to see lightning storms near tornadoes.

LEARN HOW to SPOT a TORNADO

- The sky may turn a greenish black color.
- Debris may drop from the sky.
- Sounds like a waterfall or rushing air.
- A funnel-shaped cloud appears with other clouds moving quickly toward it.

TORNADO CHASERS

- Usually park southeast of the tornado. It is usually the safest spot to film or record. The reason is because tornadoes normally travel from southwest to northeast.
- May drive over 100 miles during a single chase.
- Tornadoes aren't the only danger, tornado chasers have to be careful of the lightning coming from the thunderstorms that produce tornadoes.
- Usually are prone to car crashes. Sometimes tornado chasers get hit by cars fleeing the same storm that they are chasing.
- Hail is common concern for tornado chasers.