

A SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY CAN HAPPEN AT ANY TIME IN ANY LOCATION.

Homes and families in different parts of the country can be at risk for tornadoes, wildfires, hurricanes, floods, or severe winter weather such as blizzards and ice storms. It is important to be aware of the potential risks to your home and be prepared to protect your family in the event of a weather-related emergency.

Tornado

Tornadoes are swiftly rotating columns of air spawned by violent atmospheric storms. Tornadoes are funnel-shaped and descend from a cloud to reach the ground, picking up dust and debris and causing destruction of anything in their path. Tornadoes happen throughout the world, but they are particularly common in an area known as Tornado Alley, which stretches from Texas across the Great Plains into South Dakota. Every year, around 1,200 tornadoes strike in the United States and about 60 people are killed, mostly due to flying or falling debris.

BE INFORMED:

<http://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/safety.html>

<http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/tornado#About>

<https://stormaware.mo.gov/preparing-for-a-tornado/>

<https://weather.com/safety/tornado/news/tornado-safety-tips>

GET READY FOR TORNADOES

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms and they are Georgia's No. 1 weather-related killer. They can develop without warning and oftentimes can be hidden by trees or rain. Be prepared to act quickly. Planning and practicing specifically how and where you take shelter is a matter of survival. Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year, making advance preparation vitally important.

BEFORE A TORNADO

- A storm can strike suddenly and it may occur when family members are in different places, so develop a [family communications plan](#).

- Make a [Ready kit](#) for at least three days of self-sufficiency. Familiarize yourself with the terms that are used to identify a tornado hazard.
- A **tornado watch** means weather conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop.
- A **tornado warning** means either a tornado is occurring or expected to develop shortly in your area, and you need to take shelter immediately.
- Determine in advance where you will take shelter in case of a **tornado warning**.
 - Storm cellars or basements provide the best protection.
 - If underground shelter is not available, an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible is the best option.
 - In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible.
- Consider building a safe room. You can find plans for building or reinforcing an interior room to provide better protection on the [Federal Emergency Management Agency website](#).
- Contact your [local emergency management agency](#) to learn how your community sends warnings. Some communities use sirens, others use a mass notification system, and still others depend on media to alert residents to severe storms. Make sure you have multiple ways to receive warnings.
- Listen to [NOAA Weather Radio](#), commercial radio, television newscasts, or download a local weather app for the latest information. In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions. Look for approaching storms.

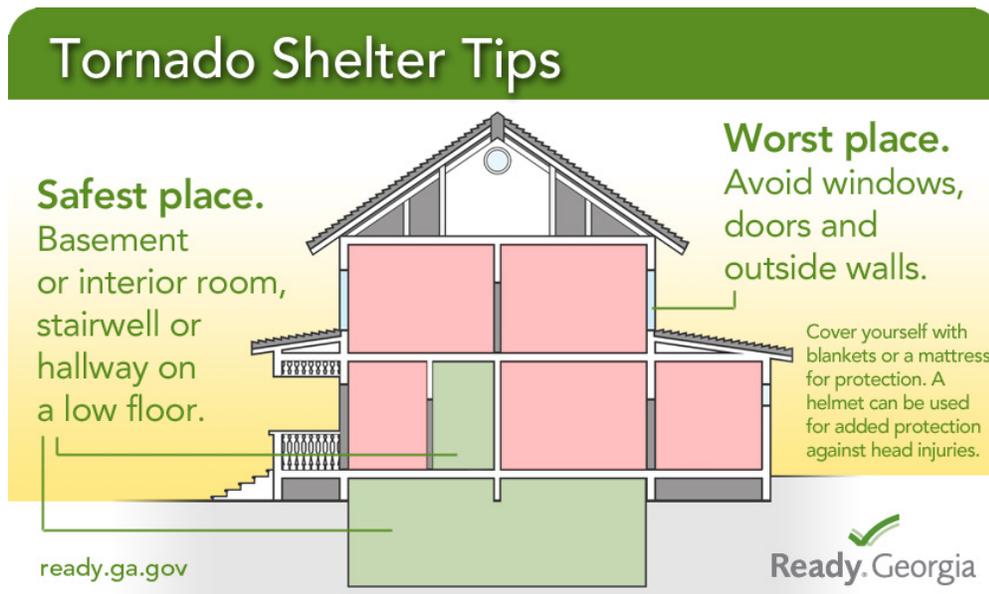
WHEN A TORNADO WATCH IS ISSUED

- Monitor [NOAA Weather Radio](#), commercial radio or television for the latest weather forecasts, or download a weather app.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions. Blowing debris or the sound of an approaching tornado may alert you. Many people say it sounds like a freight train.
- Make sure you know where you would seek shelter if a **tornado warning** was issued.
- If you are in a mobile home, consider moving to a sturdy building (shelter). If a **tornado warning** is issued, you will not have much time to act.

WHEN A TORNADO WARNING IS ISSUED

- If you are inside, put on sturdy shoes and go to a safe place and protect yourself from glass and other flying objects.
- If you are outside, hurry to a safe place in a nearby sturdy building.
- If you are in a car and you see large objects flying past while you are driving, pull over and park. You now have two choices:
- Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.
- If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, in a deep ditch for instance, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.
- If you live in an apartment that is on an upper floor, get to the lowest level of the building.

Check out our infographic for more tips on what to do when a tornado strikes.



AFTER A TORNADO

- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should listen to [NOAA Weather Radio](#), watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news and instructions as they become available.

- Remain out of damaged buildings and stay clear of downed power lines. Report downed lines to your local power company.
- If you are trained, help injured or trapped people. Check on others who may require special assistance, such as the elderly, children and people with disabilities.

Hurricane

When an immense storm forms over water and makes its way to land, it is called a hurricane. Hurricanes bring with them storm surges, heavy rainfall, and powerful winds. They can lead to rip currents, floods, and tornadoes. Hurricanes occur in the United States and throughout the world, and they can go by different names depending on where they spawn: In the Atlantic Ocean and the northeast Pacific Ocean, they're called hurricanes; in the northwest Pacific, they're called typhoons; and in the south Pacific and Indian Ocean, they're called cyclones. Hurricanes occur seasonally, with hurricane season lasting from mid-May or early June until the end of November. Few Americans die due to hurricanes thanks to improved forecasting and communication that can lead to more effective evacuations, though there have been some notable exceptions; for instance, 1,225 Americans died during 2005's hurricane season, primarily victims of Hurricane Katrina.

<https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>

<https://www.cnn.com/2012/08/27/us/hurricane-preparation/index.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2012/08/27/us/hurricane-preparation/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/hurricanepreparedness/index.html>

<http://hurricanesafety.org/prepare/hurricane-safety-checklists/>

Flood

A flood happens when land that is typically dry is inundated with water. A flood can involve water that is a few inches deep or many feet deep, and it can happen quickly, in what is called a flash flood, or happen over the course of hours or days. Floods can result from heavy rainfall, overflow due to a blocked waterway, melting snow, or a combination of these. Floods can happen virtually anywhere, but low-lying areas located near water are particularly at risk. Floods are the most common natural disaster to occur in the United States. Between 2005 and 2014, the total of insurance claims for flood damage averaged \$3.5 billion per year. Around a hundred deaths per year are attributed to floods in the U.S., and many of these are vehicle-related drownings.

<http://floodsafety.com/national/property/insurance/nfip.htm>

https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/flood/FloodManualsGuidesandBrochures/Flood_Smart.pdf

<https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/flood/Pages/prepareforflooding.aspx>

Wildfire

An unwanted, uncontrolled fire in a natural area is a wildfire. Wildfires occur in grasslands, prairies, and forests, and they can destroy homes and claim lives over a wide area. Embers from one fire can spark others, and the smoke can lead to breathing issues in those living or working near the fire area. Wildfires can occur at any time, but droughts increase the odds that a devastating fire will strike. Wildfires clear an average of 4 to 5 million acres each year in the United States.

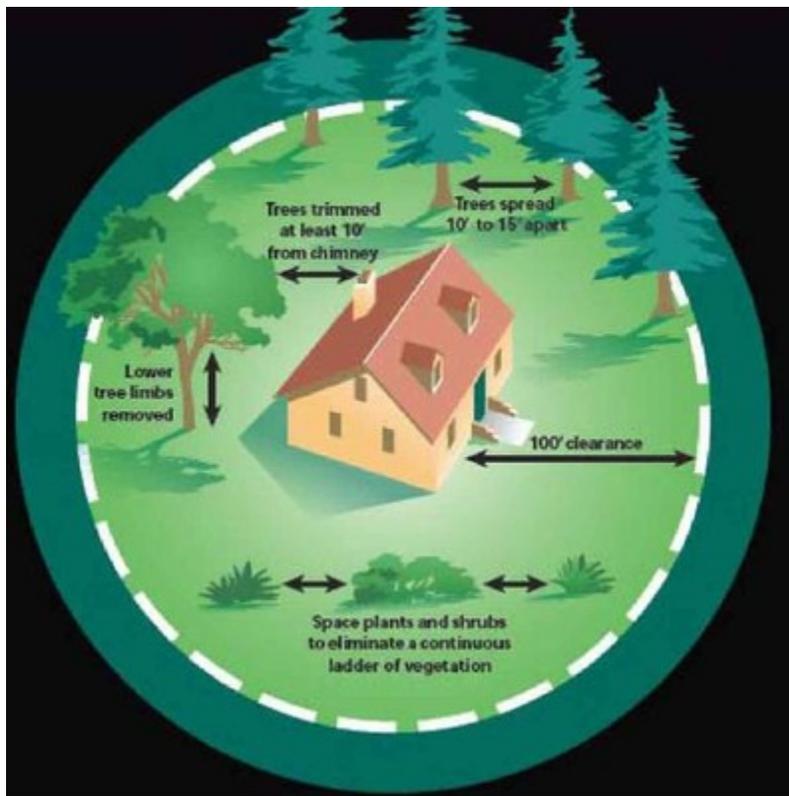
<https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-wildfires>

<http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Emergency-Supply-Kit/>

<https://www.osha.gov/dts/wildfires/preparedness.html>

Before, During, and After a Wildfire

What to do during, before and after a wildfire.



What to do BEFORE a Wildfire:

- Create defensible space to separate your home from flammable vegetation and materials (minimum 30 ft.)
- Adhere to all local fire and building codes and weed abatement ordinances.
- Keep all trees and shrub limbs trimmed so they do not come into contact with electrical wires or overhang your chimney (Do not trim around power lines yourself, call a professional).
- Prune all lower branches 8 feet from the ground.
- Keep trees adjacent to buildings free of dead or dying branches.
- Stack firewood away from your home and other buildings (Keep clearance around your piles).
- Keep roof surfaces clear of pine needles, leaves and debris.
- Clean chimneys and check and maintain spark arresters twice a year.
- Keep rain gutters clear of debris.
- Use approved fire-resistant materials when building, renovating or retrofitting structures.
- Be sure your house numbers show clearly from the street, both day and night.
- Store combustible or flammable materials in approved containers.
- Store all important papers in a fireproof container or keep copies at another location.
- Make evacuation plans with family members. Include several options with an outside meeting place and contact person. Practice regularly.
- Keep battery operated radios and flashlights with additional fresh batteries on hand.

What to do DURING a Wildfire:

- Turn on a TV or radio to get the latest emergency information.
- If you have a ladder, prop it against the house so you and firefighters have access to roof.
- If hoses and adequate water are available set them up. Fill buckets with water.
- Remove combustible material from the area surrounding the house (lawn chairs, tables, etc.).
- Turn a light on in each room for visibility in case of smoke.
- Open or take down flammable drapes and curtains.
- Close all venetian blinds and non-flammable window coverings.
- Move upholstered furniture away from windows and sliding glass doors.
- Be ready to evacuate all family members and pets when requested to do so.
- Turn off air conditioning/air circulation systems
- Detach electrical garage doors. Back in your car and leave the keys in the ignition.
- Secure your pets if possible.

What to do AFTER a Wildfire:

- Check with fire officials before attempting to return to your home.
- Use caution when re-entering a burned area - flare ups can occur.
- Check grounds for hot spots, smoldering stumps and vegetation. Use your buckets of water.
- Check the roof and exterior areas for sparks and embers.
- Check the attic and throughout the house for hidden burning, sparks and embers.
- Continue to check for problem areas for several days.
- Contact 911 if any danger is perceived.

Winter Weather

Each winter, snow, sleet, ice, and freezing rain are experienced across much of the United States. Even areas of the country that are typically thought of as warm-weather locations, such as Atlanta, can have winter weather emergencies. One weather emergency in the winter that can be particularly dangerous is a blizzard. Blizzards are characterized by heavy, blowing snow that causes poor visibility, known as a whiteout, which can contribute to catastrophic car accidents. Blizzards have become an increasing threat; the average number of blizzards in the U.S. per year, calculated using more than 50 years' worth of data, is 10, but over just the past few decades, the average has been closer to 20. The Great Blizzard of 1888 is known as the deadliest blizzard in U.S. history, blasting the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York with nearly five feet of snow and killing more than 400 people. Ice storms can also lead to emergency situations: In addition to causing slippery roads and walkways, ice can accumulate on power lines, causing power outages.