



# Tornado Preparedness Checklist

A tornado is one of nature's most destructive storms. Unlike a hurricane or tropical storm, a tornado can develop with little warning, sometimes within minutes of the start of a thunderstorm, leaving little time to react. The wind associated with a tornado can exceed 300 miles per hour, which can cause catastrophic damage. Every area in the United States has the potential of being impacted by a tornado. Tornadoes peak in the southern states from March to May, and from late spring to early summer in the northern states. The importance of being prepared for a tornado cannot be overstated.

The following checklist can help you to prepare your business for the effects of a tornado.



## BEFORE THE TORNADO



Have a plan to provide emergency notifications (warning system) to all employees, clients, visitors and customers in the event of a tornado.



Assign the responsibility of monitoring external weather conditions to several employees. Be sure to have adequate coverage for all hours of operation, including accommodations for when these individuals will be out of the office.



Determine multiple reliable sources (weather websites, weather blogs, etc.) and tools to monitor real-time weather conditions.



Locate multiple locations that can be used for shelter by employees during a tornado. Typically, an interior room with concrete or masonry walls is the safest. Most local fire departments will assist companies in the identification of suitable tornado shelters.



Post tornado shelter and evacuation maps in common areas throughout your facility.



Identify a separate and unique alarm tone/siren/announcement to notify employees and guests to proceed to the designated tornado shelter. It is VERY important the alarm signal is not confused with an evacuation alert.



Develop a phone redirection strategy (e.g., if telephone service is cut, will your 800# forward to cell phones, answering service, Google Voice, etc.).



Tornado emergency action plans should guide employees and guests to congregate outside of the building at their evacuation assembly point once the "all clear" signal has been given.



Conduct regular drills to prepare employees for the real thing. Be sure to have a process to take a headcount for all employees during drills. It is key to practice this process. Also, have a procedure in place to collect headcount information from multiple shelter locations/assembly locations.



When you establish your time line for workplace preparation and closure, keep in mind that employees may need to prepare their families and take care of personal matters. Be sure to allow enough time for them to execute their personal preparedness plans.



Identify critical employees, and make sure they understand what is expected of them during a disaster. For example, you may need IT staff immediately after a disaster to protect and reestablish your technology systems. If you need those employees on-site (or at a remote location) make travel, hotel and meal arrangements in advance.



# Tornado Preparedness Checklist (cont.)



## BEFORE THE TORNADO (cont.)



If employees will be required to return to the workplace to assist in the recovery process before all services are restored, obtain and store an adequate supply of water, nonperishable food, first-aid supplies, generators, cleaning supplies, batteries, flashlights and other necessities.



Develop a plan to allow your payroll, benefits and HR functions to operate during a disaster, after a disaster, or during any period in which access to your workplace is restricted.



Update your employee contact information regularly and at the beginning of any season during which natural disasters are more likely. For those in hurricane-prone areas, that means now.



Put your crisis management plan in writing and give it to all employees.



## DURING THE TORNADO

**If a Tornado Warning is issued or if threatening severe weather is approaching, seek shelter immediately.**



Once inclement weather has been identified, sound the alarm to direct employees and guests to tornado shelters.



Look for the characteristics of a tornado; dark, often greenish sky, large hail, dark, low-lying clouds and/or a loud roar, similar to a freight train.



Stay away from windows.



Work trailers should be abandoned; even if they are tied down, they offer little protection from tornadoes.



Go to a pre-designated shelter area such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar or the lowest building level. If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to protect your head and neck. Do not open windows.



## AFTER A DISASTER



Check for injuries and get immediate medical assistance for the injured. Take care to ensure the continuing safety of employees and guests.



Once the storm has passed, direct employees and guests to exterior emergency assembly locations to take a headcount. Notify the fire department of any missing persons.



Ensure the site is safe for re-entry. A third-party inspector may be needed to verify it is safe to be occupied.



Communication following a disaster is critical. Establish a communication plan that will work regardless of the nature of the disaster. Consider a secondary toll-free number or website that is hosted outside of your region. Instruct employees on when, how and what to communicate through these channels following a disaster.



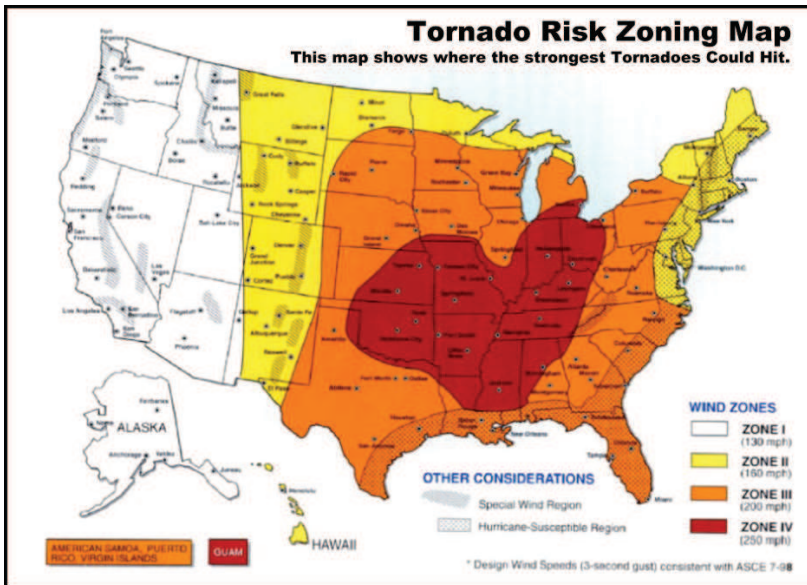
# Tornado Preparedness Checklist (cont.)

## ✓ YOUR PEOPLE

- ☐ Ensure you have an emergency communication plan in place prior to the storm.
- ☐ During evacuation have a central point of contact for all employees, and ensure you know where your people are located.
- ☐ During evacuation activate your phone redirection strategy; failover to cell phones, answering service, Google Voice, etc.
- ☐ Following the tornado, notify all employees, vendors and stakeholders of next steps.

A tornado can occur quickly, sometimes without any warning. Proper planning and procedures will help to protect your employees and your business from the destructive and potentially deadly effects of a tornado.

Tornadoes are classified using the “Fujita Scale.” The intensities shown in the chart below:



Map provided by stormchasercenter.net

Category	Wind Speed (MPH)	Intensity
F0	< 73	Gale
F1	73-112	Moderate
F2	113-157	Significant
F3	158-206	Severe
F4	207-260	Devastating
F5	261-318	Incredible