

To prepare for and mitigate the impact of tornadoes, focus on early warning systems, reinforced sheltering, and securing your immediate environment to prevent debris damage.

1. Preparation: Before a Tornado

Proactive planning is the most effective way to reduce risk.

- **Build a Safe Room:** Consider installing a purpose-built safe room or storm shelter. According to [FEMA P-361 guidance](#), shelters built to these standards provide "near-absolute protection" from extreme winds and debris.
- **Create an Emergency Kit:** Maintain a kit containing a battery-powered **NOAA weather radio**, flashlights, extra batteries, first aid supplies, and a 72-hour supply of food and water.
- **Identify Shelter Locations:** Locate the safest place in your home, typically a **basement** or an interior room on the lowest floor without windows.
- **Practice Drills:** Conduct regular hazardous weather drills so every family member or employee knows exactly where to go when a warning is issued.

2. Mitigation: Reducing Physical Risk

Mitigation involves making your property less vulnerable to high winds.

- **Secure Projectiles:** Tornado winds can reach over 300 mph, turning loose objects into dangerous missiles. Secure patio furniture, rubbish bins, and garden tools.
- **Property Assessment:** Conduct a site exposure assessment to identify weak points in your home's structure, such as

garage doors or roof attachments, and reinforce them if necessary.

- **Tree Maintenance:** Trim dead or overhanging branches that could fall on your home during a storm.

3. Immediate Response: During a Tornado

- **Listen for Alerts:** Use local television, radio, or your weather radio to monitor **watches** (conditions are favorable) and **warnings** (a tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar).
- **Shelter Immediately:** Move to your designated safe area. If you are in a mobile home or vehicle, seek a sturdy building immediately; these structures offer little to no protection.

4. Recovery: After the Event

- **Safety First:** Watch for unstable buildings, fallen debris, and **downed power lines**. Never touch exposed wires.
- **Document Damage:** Before beginning repairs, take photos of all property damage for insurance claims.
- **Hire Licensed Professionals:** When rebuilding, use locally based, licensed, and insured contractors to ensure structural integrity.