Tornado Safety

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms. Tornadoes must always be taken seriously. Tornadoes can be very dangerous — sometimes even deadly. They come from powerful thunderstorms and appear as rotating, funnel-shaped clouds. Tornado winds can reach 300 miles per hour. They cause damage when they touch down on the ground. They can damage an area one mile wide and 50 miles long.

Every state is at some risk, but states like Iowa in "Tornado Alley" have the highest risk. Tornadoes can form any time of the year, but the season runs from March to August. The ability to predict tornadoes is limited. Usually a community will have at least a few minutes warning. The most important thing to do is TAKE SHELTER when a tornado is nearby.

Important Terms To Know:

Tornado *Watch* — Tornadoes are possible. Stay tuned to the radio or television news.

Tornado *Warning* – A tornado has been sighted. Take shelter immediately! You may hear an outdoor warning siren.

Tornado Safety Tips

Have a plan. Make sure you know where to go during bouts of severe weather — in your home, your office or a strong shelter nearby.

Know the territory. Learn which county you live in, as well as the surrounding ones, and listen for tornado warnings on the TV and radio.

Establish an emergency contact in another city. Emergency experts say it's often easier to place a long-distance call than to call someone within the same community.

Pack a storm kit. Stash an emergency kit in your designated refuge and equip it with first-aid supplies, bottled water, toiletries, an extra set of clothes, a flashlight and fresh batteries. Candles are a bad idea in case the storm ruptured a gas pipe.

Seek shelter fast. If you are inside, head for the basement. If you're out in the open, lie flat on the ground in the lowest spot you can find and cover your head with your arms.

Afterward, don't enter damaged buildings. Stay alert for loose power lines. Keep listening to weather reports because the tornado could be part of a bigger storm system