



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY



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**MEMA OFFERS TIPS TO DEAL WITH SEVERE SUMMER WEATHER**

***Severe Thunderstorms and Tornadoes Present Challenges***

FRAMINGHAM, MA – The Oklahoma Tornado is a strong reminder of the devastation that these storms can bring this time of year. Tornadoes are nature’s most violent storms, with whirling winds that can reach 300 mph. Spawned from powerful thunderstorms, damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long.

Massachusetts residents have recently experienced the destruction of the Greater Springfield Tornado in June 1, 2011 which killed three, injured over 300 and destroyed or damaged over 1,400 homes and businesses. The infamous Worcester Tornado, which swept through Central Massachusetts in June 9, 1953, killed 94, seriously injured over 1,200 and over 4,300 homes and businesses destroyed or damaged.

“Although tornadoes as severe as the Springfield and Worcester Tornadoes are rare, we are reminded that they can happen here and how damaging they can be,” states Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Kurt Schwartz. “It is important that we all familiarize ourselves with what we should look for and what steps we should take if a tornado is forecast.”

**Before a Tornado threatens**

- Know the terms used by meteorologists:
  1. Tornado Watch – Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Listen to the Media for updates.
  2. Tornado Warning – A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a battery backup and tone-alert feature, as well as a battery-powered commercial radio and extra batteries.
- Download the free *ping4alert!* app to your Smartphone to receive important weather alerts and emergency messages from MEMA. Easy instructions are available at [www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp](http://www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp).
- Determine locations to seek shelter, such as a basement or storm cellar. If an underground location is not available, identify an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor.

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- Know locations of designated shelters in places where your family spends time such as public buildings, nursing homes, shopping centers and schools.
- Assemble your family's Disaster Supply Kit.
- Make a record of your personal property, taking photographs/video of your belongings. Store these documents in a safe place.

### **During a Tornado Watch**

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or commercial Media for updates.
- Be alert for approaching storm, particularly revolving funnel-shaped cloud. Other tornado danger signs include a dark, almost greenish sky; large hail; a large, dark, low-lying cloud; or a loud roar, similar to a freight train.
- Be warned that sometimes tornadoes develop so rapidly; there is no visible advanced warning.
- Avoid places with wide-span roofs such as an auditorium, cafeteria, supermarket or shopping mall.
- Be prepared to take shelter immediately. Gather household members, pets and Disaster Supplies.

### **During a Tornado Warning**

- In a residence or small building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement or storm cellar. If there is none, go to an interior room on the lower level, away from windows (closet, interior hallway, bathroom). Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Get under a sturdy table and use your arms to cover your head and neck.
- Do not open windows. Use the time to seek shelter.
- Go to the center of the room, avoiding the corners, which attract debris.
- In large public buildings, go to predetermined shelter areas. Interior hallways on the lowest floor are usually safest. Stay away from windows and open spaces.
- In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest possible floor.
- Get out of vehicles, trailers and mobile homes immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building. Never try to outrun a tornado in a congested area.
- If caught outside with no shelter, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of the potential of flooding.
- Do not go under a bridge or overpass. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Watch out for flying debris from tornadoes, which is the cause of most fatalities and injuries.

### **After a Tornado**

- Listen to the Media for the latest emergency information.
- Be aware of broken glass and downed power lines.
- Help injured or trapped persons. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury.
- Stay out of damaged buildings, returning only when authorities deem it safe.
- Use the telephone only in emergencies. Texting is more likely to work.
- Leave the area if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
- Take photographs/video of the damage for insurance purposes.
- Remember to help your neighbors, particularly those who may require special assistance.

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The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA and Preparedness, go to [www.mass.gov/mema](http://www.mass.gov/mema). Also, continue to follow MEMA updates on *Twitter* at [www.twitter.com/MassEMA](http://www.twitter.com/MassEMA); *Facebook* at [www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA](http://www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA). Download the free *ping4alert!* app to your Smartphone to receive important weather alerts and emergency messages from MEMA. Easy instructions are available at [www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp](http://www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp).

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