

Tornado Safety in Schools

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Tornadoes can strike anywhere at any time. We should all prepare for the possibility of a tornado by learning the safest places to seek shelter. This applies too more than just homes. Every school should have a plan as well. Here are some guidelines for helping your school prepare for severe weather:

- Develop a plan and have frequent drills.
- Each school should be inspected and tornado shelter areas designated by a registered engineer or architect. Basements offer the best protection. Schools without basements should use interior rooms and hallways on the lowest floor and away from windows.
- Those responsible for activating the plan should monitor weather information from NOAA Weather Radio and local radio/television stations.
- If the school's alarm system relies on electricity, have a compressed air horn or megaphone to activate the alarm in case of power failure.
- Make special provisions for disabled students and those in portable classrooms.
- Make sure someone knows how to turn off electricity and gas in the event the school is damaged.
- Keep children at school beyond regular hours if threatening weather is expected. Children are safer at school than in a bus or car. Students should not be sent home early if severe weather is approaching.
- Lunches or assemblies in large rooms should be delayed if severe weather is anticipated. Gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums offer no protection from tornado-strength winds.
- Move students quickly into interior rooms or hallways on the lowest floor. Have them assume the tornado protection position - bent over with your torso resting on your upper legs and knees, head down with arms clasped over the lower head.

Practice your plan frequently! Hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions should develop a similar plan.