



Washington University in St. Louis



Emergency Management Severe Weather Safety

Spring/Summer
2015

Know the Terms

Tornado Watch— Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for information

Tornado Warning— A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.

Actions to Take During a Tornado

- If you're outside try to get inside as quickly as possible. Never attempt to try to "escape" a tornado.
- If you're inside go to the innermost part of the building on the lowest floor possible.
- Avoid places with windows, potentially hazardous chemicals, or wide-span roofs.
- Use all resources available to continue to monitor the threat (cell phones, local media, emergency.wustl.edu website). Emergency Management recommends the use of an All-hazards NOAA Weather Alert Radio with battery back-up. Weather alert radios automatically activate to warn and inform you whenever a warning is issued.

Did you know...

Outdoor tornado warning sirens are **NOT** intended to be heard while indoors. The purpose of the sirens is to help those in outdoor areas be aware that a tornado warning has been issued for the area.

THUNDERSTORMS

A thunderstorm affects a relatively small area when compared to a hurricane or a winter storm. The typical thunderstorm is 15 miles in diameter and lasts an average of 30 minutes. Despite their small size, **ALL** thunderstorms are dangerous! Of the estimated 100,000 thunderstorms that occur each year in the United States, about 10 percent are classified as severe.

Why Worry About Thunderstorms?

Tornadoes...

- Extreme tornadoes can attain wind speeds of more than 300 miles per hour, stretch more than two miles across, and stay on the ground for dozens of miles
- Hundreds of people are killed in Tornadoes each year

Lightning...

- Causes an average of 55-60 fatalities and 400 injuries each year
- Occurs with ALL thunderstorms
- Costs more than \$1 billion in insured losses each year

Straight-line Winds...

- Can exceed 125 mph
- Can cause destruction equal to a tornado

Flash Floods and Floods...

- Are the #1 cause of deaths associated with thunderstorms, more than 90 fatalities each year

Hail...

- Can be larger than a softball (5" in diameter)
- Causes more than \$1 billion in property damage each year

WUSTL/WUSM Tornado Warning Policy

St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and WUSTL rely on the National Weather Service to issue tornado warnings. Warnings may be issued if a tornado has been spotted by a trained weather observer or if radar indicates the possibility of a tornado in the region.

Each time that the NWS issues a tornado warning for St. Louis County, the University will utilize several methods to convey this information to members of our community including:

- Messages via the Alertus emergency computer desktop alert system
- Activation of emergency beacons in select classrooms and large gathering spaces
- Audible alerts in buildings with speaker-enabled fire alarm systems
- E-mails to all faculty, staff, and students with an @wustl.edu e-mail address.

When these alerts are issued, individuals should seek additional information from one or more of the following sources to determine if they are in the path of a tornado:

- Local radio or television stations or their websites
- The University's emergency information website (emergency.wustl.edu) or
- The National Weather Service website.

If it appears that you may be in the path of a tornado, take immediate action to protect yourself by going to an interior space on the lowest possible level of your building. Remain in that location until the severe weather has passed. Any of the above information sources may be consulted to help determine if it is safe to resume your normal activities.