

TST #173-A

Tornado Safety

Each year tornadoes strike in many places throughout the world, with approximately 800 making their way across the U.S. 96% of tornadoes have wind speeds from 65 to 135 mph. However, some can attain speeds in excess of 200 mph, grow as large as one mile in diameter and stay on the ground for several miles. The longest recorded damage path is 235 miles.

More than 50% of tornadoes strike the U.S. strike in an area of the Midwest known as “Tornado Alley,” which includes the Dakotas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. However, a tornado has been recorded in every U.S. state and can occur anytime during the year. Only a small percentage actually strike occupied buildings, yet every year approximately 110 people are killed by this weather phenomenon and 1,500 are injured. Sawing and drilling operators can greatly reduce their chances of injury by following a few simple rules.

One of the most important things an operator can do to prevent being injured in a tornado is to be alert to the onset of severe weather and have a plan in place to take shelter.

Know the Signs of a Tornado

- Strong and persistent rotation in the clouds, rotation may begin in any axis.
- Clouds appear to be relatively low on the ground.
- Ground wind is moving toward oncoming storm cloud.
- Whirling dust or debris under clouds – not all tornadoes show evident funnels.
- Hail or heavy rain followed by shifting winds. Many tornadoes cannot be seen due to rain coverage.
- Continuous roar or rumble – similar to that of a freight train.
- Flashes of bright lights near ground level indicate power lines are being snapped due to high winds.
- Warning sirens indicate a tornado has touched down – DO NOT rely on sirens as the only indicator of severe weather. Many areas are not within audible distance of sirens.

Plan for Taking Cover/Sheltering

- Avoid windows at all costs – glass debris is a leading cause of injury from a tornado.
- If inside, move to the lowest floor possible – basements are preferable. Do not use elevators, use stairs. Stairwells are often reinforced and designed as tornado shelters.
- Move to the interior of a building, such as a hallway without glass. Avoid large objects that may tip over. Avoid gymnasiums or other large rooms with wide spanning roofs as there are likely to collapse.
- Crouch down and cover your head.
- Driving vehicles in tornadic weather is extremely dangerous. No safe options existing when in a vehicle, only less dangerous ones. If a tornado is visible in the distance and traffic is light, move away from the tornado at right angles and seek shelter in a safe building.

- If debris falls while you are driving or you are caught in extreme winds, safely pull out of traffic lanes and stay in the car with seatbelts secured. Put head below windows and protect with a blanket, coat or other similar item. If it is safe to leave the vehicle, seek an area lower than the level of the roadway – ditched are usually lower points.
- NEVER seek shelter under an overpass or bridge. Winds underneath bridges are unguarded and nothing will protect you from debris.

After the Tornado

- Stay together with your group and wait for emergency personnel to arrive.
- Render aid to those who are in need of care.
- Keep clear of electrical lines and water near power lines. These lines may be energized.
- Avoid debris such as glass, nails and other sharp objects.
- Stay away from damaged buildings as they may collapse without warning.
- Do not use any lighters, emergency flares or other items that may produce sparks or flames. Damage from the tornado may have caused gas lines or fuel tanks to leak.

Tornado Safety Quiz

The following statements should be answered with “True” or “False.” Answers below.

1. Tornadoes only occur in the Midwest region of the U.S. during the spring.
2. Ground winds moving toward an oncoming storm with low lying clouds could indicate conditions for a tornado.
3. If you do not hear a warning siren, there is no chance of a tornado.
4. Taking cover underneath an overpass is a safe place to stay during a tornado.
5. Using a lighter in an area affected by tornado damage is safe.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Answers:

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. False