

Tornado Preparedness Requires a Plan

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), tornadoes are the No. 1 severe weather-related killer in Georgia. Last January, severe storms spawned a powerful EF-3 tornado, which tore across Bartow, Fannin, Gilmer and Gordon counties, killing one man and damaging hundreds of homes and businesses. Less than two months later, on March 18, 2013, EF-1 and 2 tornadoes were confirmed in Burke, Meriwether and Pike counties. One person was killed in these storms.

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. Tornadoes can vary in shape, size and intensity. Most tornadoes are weak, lasting a few minutes and producing winds of less than 100 mph. However, a few tornadoes are strong or even violent. These tornadoes last from 20 minutes to more than an hour and can produce wind speeds higher than 166 mph.

"The best thing to do to protect yourself and your family is to have a plan of action before a threatening tornado develops," said Franklin County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director Lyndon Burgess.

Prepare a Home Tornado Plan

- Pick a place where family members could gather if a tornado is headed your way. It could be your basement or, if there is no basement, a windowless center hallway, bathroom or closet on the lowest floor. Keep this place uncluttered.
- If you are in a high-rise building, you may not have enough time to go to the lowest floor. Pick a place in a hallway in the center of the building.

Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit Containing

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Canned food and can opener.
- At least three gallons of water per person per day.
- Protective clothing, bedding or sleeping bags.
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- Written instructions on how to turn off electricity, gas, and water if authorities advise you to do so. (Remember, you'll need a professional to restore natural gas service.)

Stay Tuned for Storm Warnings

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, local radio and television stations, or download the *Ready Georgia* app for updated storm information.
- Know what a tornado WATCH and WARNING means:
 - A tornado WATCH means a tornado is possible in your area.
 - A tornado WARNING means a tornado has been sighted and may be headed for your area. Go to safety immediately.

- Tornado WATCHES and WARNINGS are issued by the National Weather Service.

When a Tornado WATCH is Issued

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, local radio and television stations, or download the *Ready Georgia* app for further updates.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions. Blowing debris or the sound of an approaching tornado may alert you. Many people say it sounds like a freight train.

When a Tornado WARNING is Issued

- If you are inside, go to the safe place you picked to protect yourself from glass and other flying objects. The tornado may be approaching your area.
- If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building. As a last resort, lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area.
- If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for safety.

After the Tornado Passes

- Watch out for fallen power lines and stay out of the damaged area.
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
- Use a flashlight to inspect your home for damage.
- Do not use candles at any time.

To help families prepare, *Ready Georgia*, a statewide emergency preparedness campaign established by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security offers the tools needed to make an emergency supply kit, develop a communications plan and stay informed about potential threats. Visitors to *Ready Georgia's* website, www.ready.ga.gov, can create an online profile to receive a tailored plan for the entire family that includes the specific amount of supplies to put in their household Ready kits. They can also find local emergency contact information, learn about Georgia-specific disasters and read preparedness testimonials from local sports stars. Employers can use the [Ready Your Business](#) guide to create custom contingency plans and children can visit the [ReadyKids](#) page for age-appropriate information, videos and games. For preparedness on the go, families can also download *Ready Georgia's* free [mobile app](#) to learn how to prepare for emergencies, create family communications plans and more.

For more information, contact Franklin County EMA at (706) 384-7118 or visit these websites: www.ready.ga.gov, www.srh.noaa.gov/ffc/ or www.gema.ga.gov.

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About Ready Georgia

Ready Georgia is a statewide campaign designed to educate and empower Georgians to prepare for and respond to natural disasters, pandemic outbreaks, potential terrorist attacks and other large-scale emergencies. The campaign is a project of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and provides a local dimension to Ready America, a broader national campaign. *Ready Georgia* aims to prepare citizens for maintaining self-sufficiency for at least 72 hours following an emergency, and uses an interactive website, free [mobile app](#), online community toolkit, broadcast and print advertising and public awareness media messaging to reach its audiences. *Ready Georgia* is also on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).