



SBMA's Safety Newsletter

From Your Communications' Team at Southern Building Material Association, Inc.

SBMA EDITION

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Welcome to Your Current Edition of the Safety Newsletter.

Monthly Safety Update

"The best way to get something done is to begin." ~ Anonymous

"The Voice of the Carolinas, Tennessee and Virginia Building Material Industry."

Tornado Safety Basics

The 2011 tornado season has been devastating. On April 20, 2011 nearly 300 people were killed in the southern United States when a series of tornadoes swept through our region.

In North America, the tornado season begins in April, peaks in June and July, and ends in September. But really the storms can occur at any time of year.

WE HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF THESE TORNADOS HIT DURING BUSINESS HOURS, WITH EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS ABOUT WHOM WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED. DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

Tornadoes are one of nature's most violent storms. Tornadoes come in all shapes and sizes and can occur anywhere in the United States and at any time of year. Most, but not all, tornadoes in Virginia occur from April to October between the hours of 3:00 and 9:00 p.m. In 2004, 86 tornadoes touched down in Virginia with at least three of those touching down in Loudoun County.

Tornadoes are always born out of severe thunderstorms. They can be stationary or travel at speeds up to 70 mph. When they are moving, they generally tend to travel from southwest to northeast and could be on the ground for over an hour traveling many miles.

In an average year, 800 tornadoes are reported across the United States, resulting in 80 deaths and over 1,500 injuries.

Being Prepared

Preparing yourself now, by knowing a few facts and simple safety rules can keep you and your family safe.

What You Can Do

When preparing for tornadoes, the most important step is to find safe shelter. The general rule for tornado safety is to "go low and get low". In other words, you should go to the lowest level of the structure you are in, away from windows; crouch in a low position, protecting your head. This same approach applies even if you are not in a building or cannot get to one. For instance, if you are in a mobile home, a car or outside, try to get to a sturdy building for shelter. If this is impossible, lie flat in a low area with your hands covering the back of your

head and neck.

Watches and Warnings

When severe thunderstorms threaten, people should watch the sky and pay close attention to weather advisories. Environmental clues that may indicate an approaching tornado include a dark, often greenish sky, large hail and a loud roar similar to a freight train. To alert the public of tornadoes, the National Weather Service issues tornado watches and warnings.

- A tornado **watch** means that weather conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes. If a tornado **watch** is broadcast, stay tuned for further advisories and be prepared to take cover.
- If a tornado **warning** is issued, it means a tornado has actually been sighted. **Warnings** are issued for individual counties and include the tornado's location and its direction and speed. If you are in or near its path, seek shelter immediately. Do not attempt to look for the tornado. Many tornadoes in Virginia are obscured by rain and are not visible at all or are not visible until it is too late.

Safety Tips

Knowing simple safety rules and taking immediate action can save your life. The following safety tips are offered by the Virginia Department of Emergency Services, the National Weather Services and the Loudoun County Department of Fire and Rescue.

- The best shelter from a tornado is a basement. If you do not have a basement, go to an inside room without windows on the lowest level of the house (a closet, bathroom or interior hall). Protect your body from flying debris with a heavy blanket or sleeping bag.
- Avoid windows. Opening windows to equalize pressure is ineffective in reducing damage during a tornado. Don't worry about the windows; worry about finding shelter and protecting yourself.
- Mobile homes are extremely unsafe during tornadoes. Seek shelter elsewhere.
- If you are caught in an open building like a shopping mall, gymnasium or civic center, get into the restroom, if possible. In larger buildings, restrooms are usually made of concrete block and will offer more protection.
- If there is no time to go anywhere else, seek shelter right where you are. Try to get up against something that will support or deflect falling debris. Protect your head by covering it with your arms.
- If you are outside when a tornado strikes, try to find shelter immediately in the nearest substantial building. If no buildings are close, take cover by lying down flat in a ditch or depression.
- If you are in your car, get out of your vehicle and try to find shelter. A culvert or ditch can provide shelter if a substantial building is not nearby.
- Know the names of the counties, cities and towns that are near you, especially those to the west and south. You will be better able to track the tornado's direction if you are familiar with the geography of your area.



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