



Safety Matters

Tornado Shelters



Now is the time to decide the best course of action to take in case tornado warning sirens sound while you are in class, on the job, or at home (on or off campus). Remember—you are responsible for finding shelter in the event of a tornado.

There are no officially designated shelters on campus for students, faculty, and staff. From 8 to 5, on days the University is open for business, most buildings are open and available to anyone seeking refuge from a storm. Afterhours and on weekends, campus police will open three buildings: Ag Hall, Engineering South, and the Student Union for anyone on or off

campus who needs someplace to go. (If you decide to use one of these buildings, go there when it begins to get stormy—don't wait until a tornado warning has been declared. That is also when OSUPD will open the buildings.)

The 4-H Building will no longer be opened as a storm refuge for the general public. Over the years, the large basement space has been split up into offices, shops, and other areas, leaving very little room for large numbers of people. As yet, no other building has been chosen to take its place.

Follow these rules when looking for shelter:

- In a building, go to the lowest floor (basement is best), in the smallest, most interior room (put as many walls between you and the outside as possible). Cover yourself with anything that could protect you from flying debris (even the smallest pieces of wood or glass can cause serious injury if they hit you at more than 100 mph). Mattresses, heavy blankets, sleeping bags, heavy coats, football helmets are all good choices. Stay away from windows, glass walls, and skylights, even if they are located in the interior part of the building. This rule applies whether you are in your home, campus housing, a classroom, office, store, or theater.
- If you are driving, pull over and go to the nearest building, in the lowest level, smallest interior room, etc. If there is no building nearby, get out of your vehicle and get in a ditch, culvert, or other low level area, lie face down and protect your head (even if it's only with your arms). Do NOT look for shelter under an overpass. The overpass does nothing to diminish the winds—it creates a wind tunnel that can increase the damage from flying debris. (Read this account of the [Shields Overpass](#) on I-35 during the May 3, 1999 tornado. It is part of a [larger report \(www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/papers/overpass.html\)](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/papers/overpass.html) from the National Weather Service on the use of overpasses as tornado shelter.)

Get into the habit of checking the weather forecast and being aware of the possibility of severe weather. Get a flashlight and a weather radio (don't forget extra batteries). Put necessary medications and a first-aid kit with bandages in a handy place.

Remember—the storm sirens will never give an all-clear signal. If you hear a second alarm, it means there is *another* tornado warning. All Clear will be announced by Stillwater Emergency Management over local FM radio stations and most cable TV channels.