

# Tornadoes and extreme winds

## Overview

Seasonal weather, such as winds, hail, and tornadoes, can develop quickly and threaten life and property. Severe storms occur across Alberta in all seasons. It is important to know what to do to protect lives and property.

## Winds

In most of Alberta, a [wind warning](#) is given for winds expected to reach at least 70 km/h, or gust to at least 90 km/h.

## Wind facts

- Extreme, strong or gusting winds can cause injury or property damage.
- Winds of this speed can cause difficulty walking or loss of control while operating a vehicle.

## Wind survival tips

If possible:

- Secure loose objects around your property as they can become dangerous projectiles.
- Shelter your livestock.
- Shelter-in-place until the storm has passed.

## Tornadoes

A **tornado** is a violently rotating column of air extending between a thundercloud and the ground.

## Tornado facts

- Tornadoes can come with extreme wind speeds, in rare cases over 400 km/h.
- Most tornadoes develop in the late afternoon and early evening.
- Tornadoes are often hard to see from far away.
- Not all tornadoes have a visible funnel cloud.
- Tornadoes usually come from the south or west, but can come from any direction and can change direction quickly.

## Tornado survival tips

- Large hailstones are often present during tornadoes. Take cover when hail begins and do not go outside.
- May through September is tornado and hail season in Alberta. Mid-June through early August is the peak time.

Find out where your community will post information and updates during an emergency, and make sure to download the [Alberta Emergency Alert](#) app for critical, life-saving alerts.

## Financial preparedness

- Speak to an insurance agent about your specific needs.
- Know your insurance policy. Make sure your home, vehicle, business and belongings are protected.
- If possible, consider an emergency savings account to cover temporary expenses while you are out of your home.
- If you can, keep emergency cash handy in case banking services are unavailable.
- If you are evacuated, keep all receipts for additional expenses.
- Prepare a [detailed list](#) of all your belongings.
- Know the [7 steps](#) for making a home insurance claim.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada is ready to answer your questions. Connect with them by email at [askibcwest@ibc.ca](mailto:askibcwest@ibc.ca) or by telephone 1-844-227-5422. For more information on insurance preparedness visit [ibc.ca](#).

## For more information

Read our other fact sheets on:

- Blizzards, freezing rain, and ice storms
- Thunderstorms, lightning, and hail
- Severe weather

You can find more information about preparedness through [Alberta.ca](#), or and [Environment and Climate Change Canada](#).

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## TAKING SHELTER IN EXTREME WINDS

How to protect yourself from extreme winds (90 km/h or more) depending on the type of building you are in

Structure	Safety tips
All cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get down, protect your head and watch out for flying debris.</li><li>• Do not chase tornadoes. They are unpredictable and can change course abruptly.</li><li>• A tornado is deceptive, it may appear to be standing still when it is moving toward you.</li><li>• Keep your radio on to find out what areas are affected, what roads are safe, where to go, and what to do if you have been directed to evacuate.</li><li>• Keep your emergency kit close by.</li><li>• Follow instructions from authorities. Remember, disobeying an order puts lives at risk.</li></ul>
Detached-home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Go to the basement or underground shelter, if available.</li><li>• Otherwise, take shelter in a small interior ground floor room such as a bathroom, closet or hallway.</li><li>• Make sure windows and doors are closed and secured, then stay away from them.</li></ul>
Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shelter in your home, as above. Do not try to rescue livestock unless you feel it is safe to do so.</li></ul>
Office or apartment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take shelter in an inner hallway or room, ideally in the basement or on the ground floor.</li><li>• Do not use the elevator. Stay away from windows.</li></ul>
Large building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buildings such as an arena or shopping mall may collapse if a tornado hits.</li><li>• If possible, find shelter in another building.</li><li>• If trapped inside, take cover under a sturdy object such as a table or desk.</li></ul>
Mobile home or vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mobile homes or vehicles are not safe during tornadoes or any extreme wind storms.</li><li>• More than half of tornado-related deaths occur in or near mobile homes or in vehicles.</li><li>• Seek shelter in a sturdy building immediately.</li><li>• Ensure your emergency plan includes a nearby safe place to evacuate to.</li></ul>
Driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If in a rural area and the threat is visible in the distance, you may be able to avoid a tornado by moving at right angles to its path. Otherwise, seek sturdy shelter immediately.</li><li>• If the threat is near and shelter is not available, get out of your car and take cover in a low-lying area, such as a ditch, but beware of flooding.</li><li>• Never try to outrun a nearby tornado.</li><li>• Avoid hiding under bridges or overpasses.</li></ul>