



Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners

Health and Safety

Updated: September 12, 2015

Issue: TORNADOS and Personal Safety

Background to the Issue:

- In the last few years there have been several occasions when tornados have touched down in areas in Manitoba such as Eli and Gull Lake. Following are some recommendations published by Environment Canada

Cautionary Notes:

- Severe thunderstorms with large hail can do substantial damage to buildings and vehicles and are usually present in some form in association with tornados.

Policy or Program Implications: What is current Policy or Program for this issue?

- Being prepared can prevent injury or death during severe weather. Watch the weather and monitor the radio stations that broadcast weather bulletins. Families should be prepared for all hazards that affect their area. This includes having a plan in place well before threatening weather is expected. Be aware of shelter locations and keep an emergency kit with fresh batteries, food, clothing, blankets, a first aid kit and tools for emergency repair jobs.

Action Taken by MACO:

- Information provided in MACO newsletter.

MACO's Recommendations for the Future:

- Be prepared, especially if severe thunderstorm or tornado warnings are issued.
- When a tornado threatens:
 1. Take shelter immediately, if available, preferably in the lower level of a sturdy building.
 2. Stay away from windows, doors and exterior walls. Flying glass is extremely dangerous.
 3. Don't waste time opening windows to keep pressure from building up in the house. It's unlikely to help anyway.
 4. Outdoors, with no shelter available, lie flat in a ditch, ravine or other low-lying area, and shield your head with your arms.

5. Don't get caught in a vehicle or mobile home, which the tornado can lift. Take shelter elsewhere or, if none is available, even a ditch offers better protection. Choose a location where your vehicle won't be hurled or rolled on top of you. More than half of tornado deaths occur in mobile homes. If you live in a mobile home, it is wise to identify a nearby sturdy shelter in advance, and go to that shelter when a severe storm is approaching.
6. Beware of flying debris. Even small objects such as sticks and straw can become lethal missiles.
7. In heavy rain, be on the lookout for flash floods and hail.
8. When swimming or boating, always head to shore at the first sight of a storm.
9. Remember that damaged and weakened structures, fallen debris, downed electrical wires, and gas leaks are potential dangers after a storm has passed.

Best Shelter:

1. In a house, go to the basement and take shelter under a stairway or a sturdy worktable in the centre of the house.
2. In a house with no basement and take shelter under a stairway or a sturdy worktable in the centre of the house. Small rooms tend to be more structurally sound so seek shelter in a hallway, small room, closet or bathroom (the plumbing may provide some structural stability). Lying in the bathtub with a mattress on top of you may provide good protection.
3. In a vehicle or mobile home, get outside and find other shelter. North American officials still debate whether seeking shelter in a car during a tornado is safe. Some advise, if the tornado is weak, a car can offer protection against flying debris and rollovers if the occupants fasten seat belts and keep their head down. However, there is no way of knowing how strong or violent a tornado is without the proper tools, so the safest strategy is to get out of the vehicle. As a last resort, lie in a ditch or culvert but be aware of flooding.
4. Avoid wide-span buildings, such as barns, auditoriums, shopping centres and supermarkets with large roofs. Go to a nearby sturdy shelter, preferably, or to the lower floor, an inside room, restroom or hallway, or get underneath a sturdy piece of furniture. At school, seek shelter in small windowless rooms such as a washroom instead of a gymnasium. Avoid areas near high walls or large chimneys that may collapse. In shopping centres, stay out of aisles and away from exterior walls and windows. Do not go to your parked car.
5. In a high rise building, move to lower levels, small interior rooms or stairwells. Stay away from elevators and windows.

Position of MACO

- Take precautions when possible.
- Follow recommendations of Environment Canada as provided above.