

# The Incredible Power of a Tornado

Nature's most incredible force.

**Genre:** Geography, History, Nature, Science and Technology

**The most destructive power of nature is the ferocity and form of the tornado.**

Get ready for many twists and turns....well, more twists than turns actually. Also known as twisters or cyclones, a tornado is a spinning, funnel-shaped cloud with powerful winds that can destroy anything along its path.



**A tornado can quickly destroy anything that lies within its path.**



There is no other force in nature that is so incredibly formidable.

Kind of like a blender in your kitchen except instead of blending fruits and veggies into a delicious drink, a tornado can destroy anything that sits above ground, like trees, street signs and even houses, whipping them up into a weather smoothie that no one asked for.

## Tornado Facts

These terrifying twisters can range in size from just a few meters (feet) to 1609.344 meters (1 mile) wide with winds that can reach 483 kilometers per hour (300 miles per hour). They are known as nature's most terrible force, with enough velocity to destroy entire towns.



**Tornadoes have been known to dislodge houses, cars, machinery, and even large animals.**

Tornados can leave nothing in their wake (or no house or car left unturned, or even cows for that matter).



Tornados can uproot massive trees, houses and even livestock.

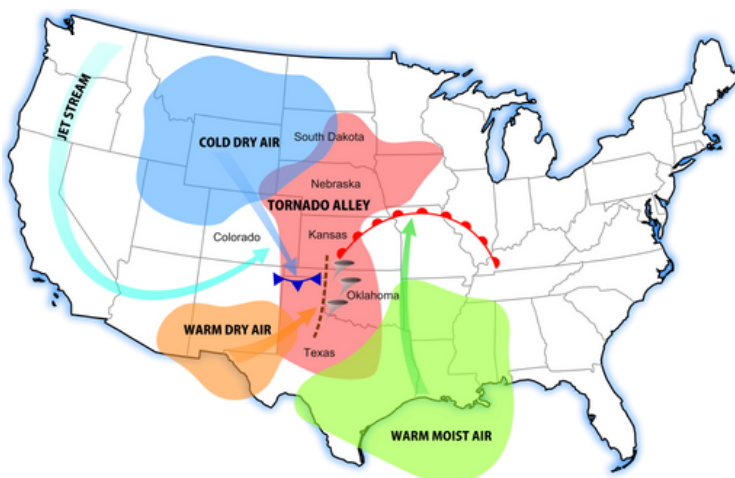
What makes tornadoes so terrifying is that they are incredibly hard to predict. Kind of like a silent predator, lurking out of sight until it is too late. If you'd like to avoid them, your best chance is to grab your winter coat and hop on a plane to Antarctica. It's been reported that tornadoes have touched down on every continent except the Great Arctic. For tornadoes to form there needs to be a moist, warm climate and Antarctica doesn't have warm weather.



**Antarctica does not have tornadoes due to its very cold weather.**



But if you're a thrill seeker, love studying the weather, and want to learn more about tornados to help prevent disasters in the future then the United States is where you want to be, specifically a little area in the Central Plain states known as Tornado Alley.



Tornado Alley is a nickname invented by the media to refer to a broad area of the US where tornados occur more regularly.

The award for Most Tornadoes in the World goes to ... you guessed it, Tornado Alley.



**Tornado Alley is an area in the US where there is a high potential for tornadoes to develop.**

About 30% of the total 1,000 tornadoes that occur in the US every year take place in Tornado Alley! (The states in what has been dubbed as Tornado Alley consist of Oklahoma, Nebraska, Florida, South Carolina, and many more...)

The landscape and weather patterns in Tornado Alley are just right to create countless twisters. Tornadoes form inside thunderclouds as warm, humid air rises and cool air falls along with rain and hail. This activity can cause spinning air currents inside the cloud which start out horizontally but then turn vertically. They drop down from the cloud and turn into a tornado.



**You can see the size, shape and formation of a tornado using satellite imagery.**



For those in the path of one of the most memorable tornadoes in history, advanced warnings were not yet set in place. On April 11, 1965, the National Weather Service could not get warnings out to the six US states (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa) that were in the tornado's path. The tornado killed 266 people, injured 3662 others, and caused 1.217 billion dollars of damage. That tragedy led to the development of the tornado warning system (known as SKYWARN) which is used to this day all over the world.

## Safety Tips 101

If you happen to find yourself on the path of one, follow these instructions and follow them quickly.

- Once a tornado warning has been issued find a safe place to hide inside, on the lowest possible level of the structure you're in, like a basement or a room with no windows. ***\*Storm cellars, built underground, are a great place to wait out the storm if available.***
- For added protection get underneath something sturdy like a heavy table.
- Cover your body with a blanket or sleeping bag and keep very low to the ground.

All of these things are your best defence against flying or falling debris created by tornadoes' fierce winds. They also make it a lot harder for the tornado to pick you up from the ground.



**Tornadoes can form very quickly, so it is important to identify them when they do arise.**

If you ever hear a tornado warning, act fast. And don't think that just because it doesn't look like a storm is brewing that you're in the clear. It's not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado. This is why they can take many unaware. An afternoon or evening in the spring is so beautiful that to many of us, it seems like the most unlikely time for a tornado to strike. Don't be fooled.

 **Good to Think About**



1. What is a tornado?

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2. How and where do tornados develop?

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3. Why are tornadoes dangerous?

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4. What should people do when a tornado is nearby?

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5. Why do some people find tornadoes fascinating enough to study and even chase after?

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## Key Vocabulary

- twister
- cyclone
- tornado
- funnel
- smoothie
- predict
- disaster
- warning
- formidable
- fierce



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