

Tornado Watch

Monitor local radio/television stations for current information.

Implement unit tornado watch and tornado shelter preparations.

- Review your tornado shelter checklist.
- Check first aid and shelter kit and ensure supplies are available.
- Ensure shelter area is clear of debris.
- Put batteries in flashlights.
- Check communications.
- Monitor weather radios.
- Determine when to relocate to designated shelter or dismiss personnel.
- Consider cancelling or curtailing training events.
- Curtail or prohibit routine business movement outside of unit facilities.
- Use sign out boards to account for personnel and visitors away from duty sections.
- Implement unit procedures for assisting the handicapped as necessary. Consider sending the "Movement Impaired" to shelters early.

Notify all on duty unit personnel of weather conditions. Ensure notification of personnel working in high noise areas. Ensure personnel are briefed of tornado shelter locations. Secure or shelter outdoor equipment and materials if time permits. Take cover immediately and dial 911 upon spotting a tornado. Know your UCC phone number and ensure it is available in the shelter for notifications, personnel accountability and further instructions.

Tornado Warning

- Notify personnel to take immediate cover. Attempt to identify and shelter any visitors. Account for all on duty personnel. Ensure all personnel remain in shelter until notified through your chain of command that the tornado warning is canceled.
- Personnel must not be permitted to leave shelter until the outside has been assessed for life-threatening hazards.
- Monitor local media and weather radios for current situation updates. The tornado warning cancellation will **NOT** be sounded using the base siren system.
- Additional sirens indicate a new tornado threat. Notification will be sent through the unit chain of command or provided by emergency responders when necessary.
- Account for all on duty personnel. Perform damage assessment. Report damage to the Unit Control Center and Emergency Operations Center. Remember to identify and account for any visitors in your shelter, by name and organization, and identify when they leave the shelter area. Assist the injured and call 911 for badly injured personnel.

Voices of Experience

What to do when a tornado is coming

Kimberly Woodruff
Staff Writer

Oftentimes the voice of experience proves to be the best teacher.

With tornado season approaching, two Tinker families are sharing their stories to help others prepare should the worst case scenario happen again.

Becky Pillifant, marketing specialist with the 72nd Force Support Squadron, and Master Sgts. Jason and Jennifer Crosby, with the 72nd Medical Group and 72nd FSS, respectively, have all experienced an F5 tornado and offer some good advice.

Ms. Pillifant was always a little wary of tornadoes, after having lived in Texas. When she and her husband, Chris, moved to Oklahoma, their house builder told them the shower would be the place to go in the event of a tornado because it was structurally sound.

Watching the news on May 3, 1999, Ms. Pillifant saw a large tornado tracking from Lawton and was not too concerned because tornadoes just don't stay on the ground that long. This one was different. It stayed on the ground and grew larger as it got closer to the metro area. The Pillifants' first thought was to get in the car and leave. They realized that was not a good idea because the tornado kept changing direction, so they got into the shower stall with the dog, some blankets, pillows, a small mattress and a few supplies.

"We just decided 'this is it,'" Ms. Pillifant said, recalling when the tornado hit their home. They heard the nails being popped from the house, and a sound like a boulder crashing through the windows broke the eerie calm. "At one time, it felt like we were floating," she said.

After it was over, the Pillifants were buried under the rubble of their home and it seemed like hours before neighbors dug them out. The shower area where they sought refuge was all that was left of their home, it was the highest point.

The couple rebuilt the same style of house on the same spot, but with one new feature: a safe room. They



Courtesy photo
Master Sgt. Jennifer Crosby, 72nd Force Support Squadron, and her son, Landon, hold on to "Hope" made of sand from the seashore of New Jersey sent by those affected by the hurricane there. Sergeant Crosby and her husband, Master Sgt. Jason Crosby, 72nd Medical Group, lost their home in the tornado that hit Moore in May 2013.



Air Force photo by Margo Wright

Searching through the rubble that once was her house, Becky Pillifant finds a stuffed flamingo that had been in her car before a tornado ripped through Moore and south Oklahoma City on May 3, 1999. Ms. Pillifant, a marketing specialist in the 72nd Force Support Squadron, said she has the flamingo in a shadowbox in the kitchen of her new home, which was built in the same spot as the one destroyed in 1999.

decided on a walk-in safe room instead of underground after having been buried for so long.

Now when they hear tornado warnings or sirens, they pay very close attention. Even their dog, Goldie, would sit and watch television when she heard a tornado siren.

"Be weather aware and alert," Ms. Pillifant said. "Don't take it for granted that it might not happen to you."

Ms. Pillifant said she misses pictures more than anything else she lost on that day in 1999.

"Our children were just beginning to have children of their own, so that is the thing I miss most," she said. Everything else can be replaced.

From experience, Ms. Pillifant offers some advice for putting together a tornado kit. Along with the typical emergency kit items like batteries, flashlights and water, Ms. Pillifant recommends including copies of everything in the wallet, copies of bills, the titles to any cars, marriage licenses, birth certificates and so on. If time permits, grab cell phones and chargers, and by all means have a battery operated radio in the kit.

When the May 20, 2013, tornado hit Moore, the Crosbys had just arrived home with their children and took shelter in an interior bathroom along with their three dogs.

They made it into the bathroom just five minutes before the F5 tornado hit their home at 3:15 p.m. The Crosbys' son was praying Psalms 23 out loud.

"We could hear the house being ripped apart around us. It sounded like a jet engine," said Jason. Jennifer said her body was sore the next day from holding their children, Caitlyn and Landon, so tight. "I was scared they might be ripped from us if the walls were taken," she said.

After it got quiet, they prepared the children for what they might see before they left the room. "It was very overwhelming, it looked like a war zone," he said.

Both families said it is a good idea to wear proper clothing with good shoes or at least have them nearby.

Insulation is blowing everywhere and there are nails and debris. Like Ms. Pillifant, Caitlyn also stepped on a nail after leaving the bathroom.

Jason Crosby set about checking on others in the aftermath. He checked on elderly neighbors and when he heard screaming from nearby Briarwood Elementary, he went to help out there. Jason helped pull out a teacher with a metal bar through her leg. "It was very humbling to see how the people of Moore, Tinker AFB and Oklahoma all worked to support victims," he said.

One of the biggest lessons the Crosbys learned from the experience is to film everything you have. Insurance companies want lists of items lost and it can be very overwhelming to try and remember everything once it is gone. Think about all the books, DVDs, even socks and underwear, pants and T-shirts people own and it is daunting to remember.

The Crosbys also have advice for parents. Children are all going to react differently in such a traumatic situation, so be patient with them. Children may be fine at first and then six-months later have a complete meltdown and want their old life back.

Following the May 20 tornado, the Airman and Family Readiness Center set up an Emergency Family Assistance Center and the support was amazing, said Jason. "We hope that we won't have to go through another tornado like that again," he said. "But if so, A&FRC is an amazing group and they are a great first resource."

Ultimately, one thing is for certain. "The way the Air Force, as a whole, has taken care of us, the way Tinker AFB has taken care of us has just been amazing," Jason said. The Crosbys want people to know that if they ever find themselves going through a tornado disaster, they can come talk to them.

Hopefully, this spring will be a quiet one, but if it should happen to be an active tornado season, perhaps a little knowledge and planning beforehand will help make a bad situation a little easier to deal with.



Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Bradley C. Church

A flag blows in the wind on May 27, over the rubble left in the wake of the May 20 EF-5 tornado that ripped through parts of Moore.

Disaster Supplies Kit Basics

On-base numbers

emergencies, non-emergencies

The following items might be needed at home or work for an evacuation. Keeping them in an easy-to-carry backpack or duffel bag near your designated shelter area is advised. Store the kit in a convenient place known to everyone. Tinker's Comprehensive Emergency Management plan has a list of required items for on base shelters. For home planning visit www.reddirtready.com. Some kit basics for home are:

- Three-day food supply
- Non-electric can opener
- Water
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First Aid kit and First Aid manual
- Supply of prescription medications
- Credit card and cash
- Personal identification
- An extra set of car keys
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Map of area and important phone numbers
- A portable, battery-powered radio or television and extra batteries
- Special needs, for example, diapers or formula, copies of prescriptions, hearing aid batteries, spare eyeglasses or other physical needs.

All emergency situations: CALL 911 — Fire, life threatening injury/threat of loss of limb or life threatening risk such as a gas leak, downed power lines or being trapped.

Tinker non-emergency situations: Call your facility manager or Civil Engineering Customer Service at 734-3117 (24-hour line).

Military family housing residents, call Balfour Beatty Communities at 732-3324 (24-hour line) for non-life threatening damage to houses.

Dorm residents call Civil Engineering Customer Service for non-life threatening damage to dorms, water leaks, damaged windows and doors, downed tree and debris, roof damage and leaks.

There's an app for that

In addition to a variety of smart phone weather applications available for download through service providers, local news stations also have text and mobile alert apps that can be used free of charge (data usage charges from providers may apply depending upon plans). Here are a few links to their pages:

<http://newsok.com/mobile/alerts>

<http://kfor.com/weather/app-center/>

<http://www.news9.com/Global/category.asp?C=167390>

<http://www.koco.com/weather/alerts>