

# University of North Carolina Wilmington

## Tornado Procedure

### I. Introduction

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) Hazards Assessment evaluates the various risks and impacts of a variety of disasters and emergency situations at UNCW and helps to define a prioritization for planning for these disasters. According to the Hazards Assessment, UNCW is vulnerable to severe weather and tornadoes. Because of UNCW's vulnerability to tornadoes, it is necessary to educate the UNCW public about tornado safety procedures.

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. The average tornado moves from southwest to northeast, but tornadoes have been known to move in any direction. The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 mph, but may vary from almost stationary to 70 mph.

Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year. Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m., but can happen at any time. In the southern states, peak tornado occurrence is March through May. Eighty-eight percent of all tornadoes are weak tornadoes, with a lifetime of 1-10+ minutes and winds less than 110 mph.

#### A. Purpose

The Tornado Procedure describes UNCW's policy on tornado safety procedures for UNCW faculty, staff, visitors, and students in the event of a tornado on campus.

#### B. Scope

This plan:

1. Is intended to focus on information regarding tornadoes that impact UNCW operations.
2. Applies to all university departments, faculty, staff, and students.
3. Builds upon existing university emergency preparedness procedures by addressing unique procedures required for the response to tornadoes.

#### C. Definitions

1. Tornado: A violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground.

2. Tornado Watch: Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are possible in the Watch area.
3. Tornado Warning: A tornado has actually been sighted somewhere in the warning area and more tornadoes are possible.
4. Fujita Scale: A scale for evaluating tornado severity based on damages. The following is a table reflecting the Fujita Scale:

Scale	Wind Estimate (MPH)	Typical Damage
<b>F0</b>	<73	<u>Light Damage:</u> Some damage to chimneys; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over; street signs damaged.
<b>F1</b>	73-112	<u>Moderate Damage:</u> Peeled surfaces off roofs; mobile homes pushed off foundations or overturned; moving cars blown off roads.
<b>F2</b>	113-157	<u>Considerable Damage:</u> Roofs torn off frame houses; mobile homes demolished; boxcars overturned; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated; cars lifted off ground.
<b>F3</b>	158-206	<u>Severe Damage:</u> Roofs and some walls torn off well-constructed houses; trains overturned; most trees in forest uprooted; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown.
<b>F4</b>	207-260	<u>Devastating Damage:</u> Well-constructed houses leveled; structures with weak foundations blown away some distance; cars thrown and large missiles generated.
<b>F5</b>	>261	<u>Incredible Damage:</u> Strong frame houses leveled off foundations and swept away; automobile-sized missiles fly through the air in excess of 100 meters (109 yds); trees debarked; incredibly severe damage will occur.

\*Fujita Scale information from [www.spc.noaa.gov](http://www.spc.noaa.gov).

## II. Procedures

### A. During a tornado watch:

1. Report any revolving funnel-shaped clouds to authorities, including University Police and the National Weather Service, Wilmington.
  - UNCW Police: 911
  - UNCW EH&S: 3057
  - National Weather Service, Wilmington: 1-800-697-3901

2. Stay tuned to local media, the UNCW web page, and the UNCW Emergency Hotline for weather alerts and emergency instructions.
    - UNCW Emergency Information Hotline: (910) 962-3991 or (888) 657-5751
- B. If a tornado is sighted approaching the campus (tornado warning):
1. If time permits, go to the interior hallway on the lowest floor.
  2. If time does not permit, go to the safest area of your classroom or office (an inside wall) furthest away from the doors and windows.
  3. Avoid windows, auditoriums, gymnasiums, or other structures with wide, free-span roofs.
  4. Take shelter underneath a desk or any heavy furniture available.
  5. Assume a curled position to protect your head and eyes.
  6. All qualified personnel will render first aid as necessary.
- C. If you are in a building with a wide, free-span roof (Trask Coliseum or Warwick Center Ballroom):
1. **Evacuate the room with the wide-free span roof immediately** and go to the closest safe location, i.e., an interior room without a wide, free-span roof and/or the lowest floor of the building.
- D. If you are in a modular unit:
1. **Evacuate the modular unit immediately** and take shelter in the closest safe building. When safely within a building that is not a modular unit, take shelter in an interior room of the building on the lower floor, if time permits.
- E. After a tornado:
1. Continue to pay attention to National Weather Service warnings and watches. Severe weather may continue.
  2. Use caution when traveling on campus and avoid debris.
  3. Report any severe damages to University Police.

### III. *Communications*

- A. When a ***tornado watch*** is issued for New Hanover County, or a tornado warning is issued for Brunswick County, Pender County, or Columbus County, notification to faculty, staff, and students will be sent out via mass email and a message will be posted on @UNCW, the UNCW homepage, and the UNCW news page. The notification will instruct the UNCW community to watch the weather, cancel any outdoor activities, and review UNCW and departmental tornado procedures.
- B. When a ***tornado warning*** is issued for New Hanover County, or signs of a tornado are seen/heard by UNCW emergency personnel, the UNCW community will be notified of the warning via mass email, and the information will be posted on @UNCW, the UNCW homepage, and the UNCW news page. A message will also be recorded on the UNCW Emergency Information Hotline. Communications during a warning will also include instructions to vacate modular structures, to call University Police at 911 to report injuries or damage, to remain sheltered until the warning has expired, and steps on how to remain safe during a tornado.