

Tornado Alley

What is a tornado?

A tornado (also known as a twister) is a spiralling funnel of air which descends from a storm cloud to the ground. Tornadoes are formed when warm air meets cold air which causes the air to twist around. This creates a vortex which then descends to the ground. Tornadoes are mobile and move across the Earth for anything between a few minutes and a few hours, destroying anything in their path.

How are tornadoes measured?

The strength of a tornado is measured on the Fujita Scale. Around 75% of all tornadoes are F0 or F1 tornadoes.

The Fujita Scale			
	Intensity	Wind Speed	Description
F0	Gale	40-72 mph	Light damage; branches broken, minor roof damage
F1	Moderate	73-112 mph	Moderate damage; mobile homes pushed off foundations; roofs damaged
F2	Significant	113-157 mph	Considerable damage; mobile homes destroyed; trees uprooted; strong-built homes unroofed
F3	Severe	158-206 mph	Severe damage; trains turned over; cars lifted from ground; outside walls blown away
F4	Devastating	207-260 mph	Devastating damage; houses levelled leaving piles of debris; cars thrown 250m
F5	Incredible	261-318 mph	Incredible damage; strongly-built homes completely blown away; objects the size of cars become airborne

Where is Tornado Alley?

Tornado Alley is the name given to the area in the USA that receives more tornadoes than anywhere else in the world. The main states affected by tornadoes are Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska although other surrounding states also get many tornadoes each year. Most houses in this area have storm cellars so that people protect themselves underground if a tornado hits.

The Moore Tornado, Oklahoma, 2013.

Of the thousands of tornadoes in the USA every year, only a few are F4 or F5 tornadoes. However, on 20th May 2013, a devastating F5 tornado hit Moore, Oklahoma. 24 people were killed and 377 people were injured. A hospital and two elementary schools were severely damaged, as well as many homes and businesses. The tornado carved a trail over a mile wide and 17 miles long across Moore and the surrounding areas. The tornado caused billions of dollars worth of damage.



Some of the damage caused by the Moore Tornado



President Obama reviewing the damage at an elementary school with the school's principal