

Tornado Terminology

Tornadoes can happen abruptly, especially during Michigan's late spring and early summer seasons. Learn the terms to understand and know what to do before, during and after a tornado.

Tornado terms:

Tornado:

A violently rotating, funnel-shaped cloud that extends from a thunderstorm to the ground with whirling winds that can reach over 200 mph.

Tornado Watch:

Tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio reports, commercial radio and television reports for further information.

Tornado Warning:

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar in your area. Take shelter immediately.

Supercell:

A system producing severe thunderstorms, featuring rotating winds sustained by a prolonged updraft that may result in hail or tornadoes.

Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale:

Rates the strength of tornadoes in the United States and Canada. There are six categories for the EF scale and are in order of increasing intensity. *It is based on wind estimates of a 3 second gust.*

EF0:

Tornadoes with estimated wind speed of 65-85 mph and leads to light damage.

EF1:

Estimated wind speed of 86-110 mph with the potential of moderate damage.

EF2:

Estimated wind speeds of 111-135 mph with significant damage potential.

EF3:

Estimated wind speeds of 136-165 mph with severe damage potential.

EF4:

Estimated wind speeds of 166-200 mph with devastating damage potential

EF5:

Estimated wind speeds of over 200 mph with incredible damage potential.