

Emergency and School Security Quick Reference Guide

Tornado

What is a Tornado?

A tornado is a violent storm consisting of a rotating column of air that is in contact with both the surface of the earth and a cumulonimbus cloud or, in rare cases, the base of a cumulus cloud. They are often referred to as twisters or cyclones, although the word cyclone is used in meteorology, in a wider sense, to name any closed low pressure circulation. Tornadoes come in many shapes and sizes, but they are typically in the form of a visible condensation funnel, whose narrow end touches the earth and is often encircled by a cloud of debris and dust. Most tornadoes have wind speeds less than 177 km/h per hour, can be up to 76 meters across, and travel several kilometres before dissipating.

Pre-season planning

- Ensure you have completed and reviewed your Emergency Response Plan (ERP)
- Trimming any tree branches hanging over building roofs
- Clearing the property of any loose items that could become projectiles during extreme winds

Know the signs of a tornado: Weather forecasting science is not perfect and some tornadoes do occur without a tornado warning. There is no substitute for staying alert to the sky. Besides an obviously visible tornado, here are some things to look and listen for:

1. Strong, persistent rotation in the cloud base
2. Whirling dust or debris on the ground under a cloud base - tornadoes sometimes have no funnel
3. Hail or heavy rain followed by either dead calm or a fast, intense wind shift. Many tornadoes are wrapped in heavy precipitation and can't be seen
4. Day or night - loud, continuous roar or rumble, this doesn't fade in a few seconds unlike thunder
5. Night - small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level near a thunderstorm (as opposed to silvery lightning up in the clouds). These mean power lines are being snapped by very strong wind, possibly by a tornado
6. Night - persistent lowering from the cloud base, illuminated or silhouetted by lightning – especially if it is on the ground or there is a blue-green-white power flash underneath

Preparedness prior to the event

- Review and update your ERP
- Keeping a list of current emergency numbers on hand including Regional Office, BAS and E&SS
- Keeping a list of current student and staff contact information
- Tune in to your local radio and TV station
- Log on to the Bureau of Meteorology website
- Monitor Emergency Alert messages sent to your phone
- **Act!** Warnings are urgent. Act immediately on the advice provided

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Immediate action

- Activate your Emergency Response Plan (ERP)
- At school: Follow the drill! Go to the interior hallway or room in an orderly way as you are told. Crouch low, head down, and protect the back of your head with your arms. Stay away from windows and large open rooms like gyms and auditoriums
- Consider School closure as per **CE Directive No.01/2015**

Follow up actions

- Keep your Students together and wait for emergency personnel to arrive. Watch your step to avoid broken glass, nails, fallen power lines etc. Stay out of any heavily damaged buildings; they could collapse at any time
- Do not use matches or lighters, in case of leaking natural gas pipes or fuel tanks nearby. Remain calm and alert, and listen for information and instructions from emergency services or local officials
- Contact your Regional Director
- Refer media to the Regional Director
- Consider school closure **CE Directive No.01/2015**
- Engage communications strategy
- Check with local councils for boiled water alerts
- Confirm power is connected
- Check that sewage services are operational
- If damage to facilities or debris on site, contact BAS immediately to respond to the clean-up and rectification works
- For support on any of the above, please contact your Regional Office Infrastructure Advisor
- Notify Education Queensland International if any international student is involved

Recovery

- Review of processes, debriefing, and memorials (if necessary)
- Seek support from School Guidance Officers and Employee Advisors as appropriate: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/contacts-ea.html>

NB: School closures are posted on DoE website <http://closures.det.qld.gov.au/> Facebook and Twitter.

Additional Information

For further information contact the Emergency and School Security on (07) 303 46011

DoE Website <https://qed.qld.gov.au/>

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