

Tornado Recovery Guide



Carey Counseling Center, Inc.

This Booklet is divided into two sections. The first section is for everyone. The second section is for parents who are helping children manage emotions related to tornadoes and storms.

Emotional Consequences of a Tornado or Storm

None of us are fully prepared to deal with a tornado or storm. We feel devastated whenever there is a loss, belongings or property are destroyed, or there is serious injury or a loss of life. We are overwhelmed when our children, friends, co-workers, and loved ones experience tragic, dangerous, or life-threatening events. Symptoms may come and go. Many people can function very well in a crisis but will eventually experience some symptoms due to exhaustion and the effect of ongoing stress. Recognizing and discussing our emotional and physical reactions as well as ways to effectively cope will help.

Common Stress Reactions Following a Tornado or Storm:

Anxiety, fear, panic, or anger
Emotional numbing
Difficulty sleeping
Walking throughout the night
Nightmares or daydreaming
Exhausting or mental fatigue
Change in appetite
Disbelief or denial of events
Reliving images of traumatic events
Dwelling on the event
Feeling easily angered or upset
Depression, or worsening fear, or panic
Accident proneness or problems concentrating
Increasing frustration or impatience
A tendency to isolate or withdraw
Neglecting or avoiding responsibilities
Fear or reluctance to express emotions
Episodes or outbursts of crying or sadness
Children acting younger or less responsible
Children return to bed wetting or messing pants

Symptoms of Fear and Panic:

Racing thoughts or poor memory
Rapid heartbeat
Dwelling on fearful possibilities
Frustration
Problems performing tasks
Avoidance
Afraid to be alone, or clinging
Muscle tension
Increased energy
Restlessness
Irritability
Rapid or faster breathing
Dizziness or feeling faint
Weakness
Sweating or perspiring
Trembling or shaking
Indigestion or stomach aches
Frightening images

Symptoms of Depression:

Too much or too little sleep
Significant increase or decrease in appetite
Loss of interest or pleasure in others or most activities
Feeling discouraged or worthless
A significant drop in performance in school or at work
Suicidal thoughts, feelings or self-harming
Fatigue or loss of energy most of the time
Restlessness, fidgeting or pacing
Uncontrolled outbursts of crying
Feeling sad, helpless, or hopeless most of the time
Episodes of fear, tensions or anxiety
Frustration, irritability, emotional outbursts
Repeated physical complaints without medical cause
(headaches, stomach aches, pain in arms or legs)
Abuse or increased use of alcohol or drugs

For Yourself

- Take time to talk about the events, especially when your thoughts and feelings arise
- Talk with people who care about you
- Contact friends when you need support
- Be with someone or, if needed, have someone stay with you a few hours a day
- Maintain a normal schedule and routine as much as possible

For Family/Friends

- Listen carefully and ask if they need your advice
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally
- Show that you understand and care
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear
- Reassure them they are okay and just be with them
- Don't avoid regular activities, or spending time with people impacted by the storm, but respect their need to be alone sometimes

Steps to take if symptoms are severe or significant

- Symptoms can be significant when they interfere with usual activities, change behavior in significant ways, or they persist for more than two weeks
- Seek medical advice for any physical symptoms that are new, especially, if you are having health problems and have not had a medical evaluation for these symptoms
- If you are unable to escape feelings of panic, depression or stress, or these symptoms are extreme or prolonged, contact a mental health professional for advice
- Seek help or advice from a qualified mental health professional if a child or an adult begins thinking or feeling suicidal

Helpful Hints to Recovery

Set a Healthy Example: Taking care of yourself is a very important part of helping others. It sets a good example, and keeps you healthy and well.

Physical Activity: Maintaining regular exercise greatly increases resistance to the stress reactions associated with traumatic events and relieves the immediate symptoms of stress.

Nutrition: Health studies have shown that by moderating fats, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, and smoking you can greatly improve your resistance to stress reactions and promote recovery.

Adequate Sleep: Try not to nap when you would normally be awake. Go to bed when you are sleepy and when you would normally sleep. Wake up when you normally would and try to avoid sleeping in. It is important to keep a regular sleep schedule as much of as possible.

Time Management: Try to schedule your time and meet as many of your usual commitments and activities as possible. Don't withdraw for an extended period. Avoid overextending yourself in your work or new commitments for long periods. Repeatedly overextending yourself is not healthy if you are doing it to avoid dealing with the emotional impact of the storm.

Talk It Out: Reaching out to friends or potential friends as a means of establishing supportive relationships can be helpful. Talk about your feelings and stress reaction with someone who is a good listener, may have experience dealing with similar problems, and is most of all, supportive.

Remember Breathing: People under stress or experiencing panic unconsciously change their pattern of breathing. When you feel stressed or panicked, take 4 to 5 slow breaths that let you inhale and exhale completely. Relax your muscles as you exhale.

Be Assertive: Use healthy and effective communication skills that will let people know what you need or want. When you deliberately ask for what you need, you are less likely to resort to blaming others, becoming frustrated or disappointed when people don't know what you need.

Take Time to Be Alone: Try to spend some time or plan some time to be by yourself. Sometimes it helps to imagine quiet places or pleasurable activities like vacations, relaxing, or enjoying a hobby.

Play: Plan and invest time in a few simple activities that are fun or entertaining.

Forgiveness: During a crisis people can't remember or do everything they would like. Forgiving yourself and expressing forgiveness to others is a key to recovery.

Be Open to Change or Obtaining Assistance: If your behavior or emotional state is significantly changed by the storm and does not improve after a substantial amount of time, seek help from a qualified mental health professional.

Help Others: Helping others can be a good way to feel better and recover. We all feel a need to be useful and to help others, but don't help others all the time to avoid dealing with your own feelings.

Laugh: Laughter is a great stress reliever. A deeply felt laugh, or even moderate laughter, has been shown to release many stress reactions and symptoms of tension.

Emergency and Household Safety Kit

Think in terms of five different categories as you put together and build your individualized emergency kit: sanitation, sustenance, survival, security, and sanity.

First, assemble all of the supplies you think you will need. Once you have assembled them, decide which type and size of container will be best for your choices. These containers could be things such as backpacks, plastic bins, 5-gallon buckets, duffel bags, or even suitcases on wheels. You may even choose to divide these items into two separate kits, depending on your needs. We will list several items in every category. Please review them and determine what you need to be safe and prepared during severe storms.

Sanitation

- Toilet paper
- Hand sanitizer
- Ziploc bags
- Change of clothes
- Feminine hygiene
- Hand towels
- Bar of soap
- Baby wipes
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Small container of bleach

Sustenance

Pack foods that can withstand both hot and cold temperatures and do not need to be cooked. If packing canned foods, be aware of the weight and remember to pack a can opener!

****Remember to periodically check food for insects, leaks, and spoilage!**

For Example:

- Tuna - Crackers - Canned Pasta - Dried Fruit - Candy Bars - Sunflower Seeds - Packs of Gum - Jerky - Peanut Butter - Fruit Cups - Meals-Ready-to-Eat - Gatorade Mix

Survival

- First Aid Kit
- Water
- Batteries
- Whistle
- Flashlight
- Water Filter
- Headlamp
- Matches
- Tarp
- Rain Poncho
- Hand/Feet Warmers
- Duct Tape
- Vaseline infused Cotton Balls in a Ziploc Bag (this can be used as an effective tender for starting fires)
- Emergency Radio
- Work Gloves
- Pocket Knife
- Maps of the Area
- Antihistamine
- Fishing Kit
- Nylon Rope
- Extra Shoes
- Heavy Duty Trash Bags
- Lighter
- Hat with a Brim

Security

- Cash
- Pepper spray
- Emergency phone numbers
- Portable cell phone charger
- Firearms, only if you are trained and comfortable with them (these also must be kept out of the reach of children)

Sanity

- Audio books
- Foam ear plugs
- Coloring books & colored pencils
- Bible
- Kindle
- Deck of cards
- CDs
- iPad
- Notebooks

Your “Be Ready” Binder

Frequently, severe storms and tornadoes displace families from their homes. Families can also be displaced from other types of emergencies. At these times, it can be almost impossible to retrieve important and personal documents from the home. In order to be prepared, it is best to make copies of these documents and place them in a binder that is readily available. If a crisis hits and your family is displaced, then you have everything you need! It is best to have a hard copy of these important documents as the internet may be down and access to electronic records is not available.

Personal Documents

- Names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of relatives and close friends
- Pet vaccination records
- Copies of marriage license, birth certificates, driver’s license, passports, concealed carry permits, social security cards, military documents, immunization records, diplomas, transcripts, and resumes
- Recent photo of each family member and pets

Financial Documents

- Copies of the front and backs of debit and credit cards
- Copies of property deeds and car titles
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of all banks
- Other important documents related to employment and or family business
- Copies of your insurance policies (life, health, automobile, homeowners)
- Copies of car registration and maintenance records
- Name, address, and contact information for anyone who sends you a bill
- Copies of savings bonds, stocks, and bonds
- Copies of statements from investment firms

Household Documents

- Color photos of your house and of each room in the house
- Photos of anything of value
- Appraisals of valuable objects, such as art, jewelry, and collectibles
- List of firearms including serial numbers
- Receipts for furniture, appliances, electronics, fitness equipment, and other larger, high-ticket items
- Copy of rent or lease agreement

Legal Documents

- Legal documents pertaining to child custody or adoption
- Legal documents related to a divorce
- Copy of your will, living trust, or family trust
- Copies of both past and current binding contracts
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers of your attorneys

Medical Documents

- Copies of health insurance cards
- List of blood types for each family member
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers for all doctors
- Medical histories of each family member
- A list of current prescriptions, dosage, and pharmacy contact information
- Copies of medical records and test results for anyone in the family with a significant health issue

Helpful Websites, Apps, and Accounts for Weather Updates!



Websites:
weather.gov
tn.gov/tema.html
warn.pbs.org

Apps:
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Twitter & Facebook:
US National Weather Service-Memphis
US National Weather Service-Paducah
FEMA Region 4



FEMA

Carey Counseling Center on YouTube

Carey Counseling Center produced four helpful YouTube videos related to managing emotions caused by severe weather.

Website Link: [youtube.com/@careycounselingcenterinc.486](https://www.youtube.com/@careycounselingcenterinc.486)

Other Helpful Resources

National Weather Service provides education and outreach tools about tornadoes, thunderstorms, and lightning safety. Go to Weather.gov, then click on the safety tab!

Local Safe Rooms

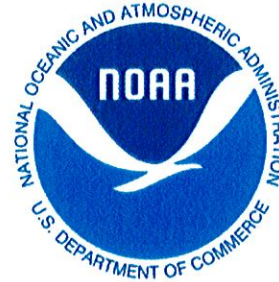
Milan: Hawkins-Whitby FEMA Community Safe Room

Dyer: Dyer Junior High School Safe Room, 322 East College St, Dyer, TN 38330

Henry: Inman Middle School, 400 Harrison St, Paris, TN 38242

Go to: https://maps.redcross.org/website/maps/arc_shelters.html
for a map of open safe rooms near you!

****Disclaimer**** please check to ensure your local safe rooms are open before travel!

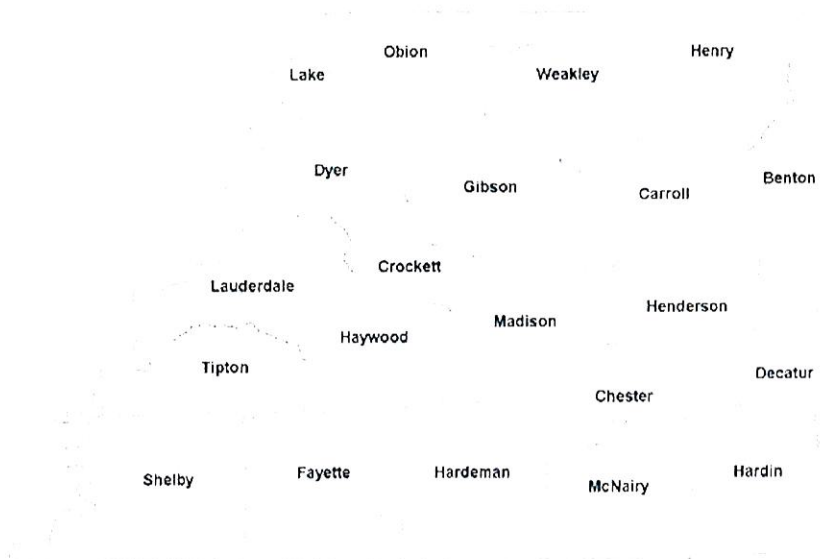


NOAA Weather Radios

County	Code	Frequency	Station ID
Benton	047005	162.400/162.525	WXK62/KWN52
Carroll	047017	162.550/162.450	WXK60/KHA46
Gibson	047053	162.500/162.550	WXK60/WWH30
Henry	047079	162.475/162.450	KIH46/KHA46
Lake	047095	162.550/ 162.500	WWG47/ WWH30
Obion	047131	162.475/162.500	KIH46/WWH30
Weakley	047183	162.475/ 162.550/ 162.500	KIH46/ WXK60/ WWH30

TEMA-West Region

Locate the county you live in and your neighboring counties!



Parents

Everyone who reads Carey Counseling's "One Stormy Day" activity book to a child or children will benefit. This activity book is designed to be a resource and to help parents and children recover emotionally and prevent further emotional problems caused by storms or tornadoes. Older children who read the story and help younger children will benefit as much or more. It is normal for children, and even adults, to be sad, fearful, upset, or even afraid to be alone for months after a disaster. There has been a change in living conditions and family routines. Belongings and relationships may have been lost. Teaching responsibility while helping everyone express their thoughts and feelings is one of the most positive things you can do.

Read this book and talk with children when you have the time to sit down and can really listen. You can read the book over and over many times. Depending on the child's age, some pages will hold more

interest than others. That's okay. Help them read at their own pace. Some children may want to color the book. That's okay, too. There are no right or wrong answers when it comes to feelings or colors. Most of the children will eventually start to feel better by listening to the story, talking about the story and storms, and even by completing the book's activities. Problem behavior may come and go but should eventually subside.

It is important for children to share what they think and feel. Children need to be shown their feelings are accepted and understood, and not just told that people understand. Feelings should not be judged or punished, but you can help your children understand the impact of negative behavior, such as hurting others or neglecting responsibility. It is helpful for older children to share their feelings in a simple way, especially if they felt the same way. Reassure children that they are safe. Spend extra time with small children at bedtime. Let your children decide on things they can do to help put family routines back to normal. Tell your children what you appreciate that they did, and praise even the smallest positive effort. Find ways to help children do things they identify that make them happy. Encourage those activities. Show your children that you can still have fun together as a family as you rebuild your home life. Talk to your kids about storms before they arrive. Knowing why a storm happens helps kids to feel less anxious!

Prepare:

****Parents will need to have a game plan for these preparations beforehand so that they can guide their children towards what needs to happen****

Discussion Topics and Questions to Use to Talk to your Kids:

- Explain to your child what they can expect to see and hear.
- Ask your child what emotions they are feeling.
- Ask your child if they have any questions.
- What is a storm?
- What causes a storm?

- What does a storm look/sound like?
- How do you stay safe during a storm?
- What is our safety plan?
- Where is our safety kit?
- Where is our safe place?
- What do we do during a storm?
- How do storms make you feel?
- How do we deal with these feelings?

Before the Storm:

- Make a safety plan and emergency kit.
- Teach your kids your contact information and the contact information for another safe adult.
- Know what county you live in and the surrounding counties.
- Role play a storm drill.
- Make or buy bracelets with your name and contact information on them for your child to wear during severe weather.

During:

- Stay calm, warm, and reassuring.
- Model calm behavior.
- Talk through the safety plan.
- Play the “lightning game” by counting the seconds between the lightning and thunder to see approximately how far away the lightning is.
- Distract from the storm and try to lighten the mood by singing, reading books, eating snacks, building pillow forts, etc.
- Stay informed but be mindful of the exposure to media that your kids might have as this can make kids feel scared and anxious.

After the Storm:

- Reassure your kids that they are safe.
- Limit the exposure to media coverage of the storm or storm damage. Images and news stories can make children feel more anxious about future storms!

Family Activities:

- Simulate thunder and lightning by using flashlights and make loud noises to create your own controlled thunder and lightning!
- Watch and read simple science-based and nature-themed books and videos as a family. *Make sure to screen videos and books first to make sure they will not be too scary or intimidating for your kids!



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