

This Emergency Response Plan is provided as a template for recreational camps. Each camp must review and tailor this document to reflect its specific location, facilities, staffing structure, camper needs, and operational activities. Camps should ensure that designated shelter areas, communication procedures, and emergency contacts are site-specific and up to date before implementation.

Emergency Response Plan – Tornado

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure a rapid, coordinated, and safe response in the event of a tornado or tornado warning. Prompt action helps protect campers and staff from severe weather hazards by ensuring everyone moves to safe shelter and remains supervised until the threat has passed.

Scope

This procedure applies to all staff and volunteers responsible for camper supervision during camp operations. It applies during all camp activities, including indoor programming, outdoor activities, waterfront programming, field trips, overnight supervision and transitions between activities.

A tornado emergency may include conditions where a tornado warning has been issued, a tornado has been sighted in the area, or severe weather conditions indicate an imminent risk of a tornado.

Actions

If a tornado warning is issued or a tornado is sighted, staff should take the following steps immediately.

Move to shelter:

Staff should immediately move campers to the designated tornado shelter or safest indoor location available. Safe locations typically include basements, interior rooms, or hallways on the lowest level of a building, away from windows and exterior walls.

Account for campers:

Once in shelter, staff should conduct a headcount to ensure all campers are present. Campers should remain together with their assigned group and staff should continue supervision at all times.

Outdoor activities:

If campers are outdoors when a tornado warning is issued, staff should move campers indoors to the nearest safe shelter immediately. If no building is accessible, staff should move campers to the lowest ground available, such as a ditch or depression, and instruct campers to lie flat and protect their head and neck.

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Overnight or cabin situations:

If a tornado warning occurs during overnight hours, staff should wake campers and move them calmly and quickly to the designated shelter area. Staff should conduct a headcount once campers arrive at the shelter location.

Remain sheltered:

Campers and staff should remain in the shelter location until the warning has ended, and it is safe to leave. Staff should continue to supervise campers and monitor weather updates during this time.

After the storm:

Once it is safe, staff should check for injuries and provide first aid if needed. Camp staff should inspect buildings and surrounding areas for hazards such as debris, fallen trees, or structural damage before resuming activities.

Emergency services:

Emergency services should be contacted if there are injuries, structural damage, trapped individuals, or other immediate safety concerns.

Communications

Clear and controlled communication is important during severe weather events.

Staff should provide calm instructions to campers and ensure all campers remain supervised during movement to shelter and while sheltering.

Camp leadership should monitor weather alerts through reliable sources and inform staff when warnings are issued or when it is safe to resume activities.

Emergency services should be contacted when injuries, damage, or other safety concerns occur.

Parents or guardians should be notified if the incident results in injuries, significant disruption to camp activities, or if campers must be relocated.

Any communication with media should follow the organization's established communication policies.

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Additional Recommendations For Camps

Camps are encouraged to implement the following measures to reduce risk during severe weather events:

- Identify and clearly designate tornado shelter areas within camp buildings
- Ensure all staff know the location of shelter areas and the quickest routes to reach them
- Monitor weather conditions regularly during camp operations
- Ensure staff know how to receive weather alerts and warnings
- Conduct drills so staff and campers understand how to respond to tornado warnings
- Maintain emergency supplies in shelter areas where possible
- Ensure staff are trained in emergency procedures before camp operations begin
- Review and document any severe weather incidents and update procedures as needed.