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Continuity IQ

Fast Facts for our Valued Friends and Clients **March 2008**

Here are some bullets and brain teasers about current events from your friends at Disaster Survival Planning Network (DSPN). In this issue, we provide information about tornadoes. If you'd like to forward this message to your colleagues, just click the "Forward Email" link at the bottom of this page.

Fast Facts about Tornadoes

Did you know...

- According to Gale Encyclopedia of Science, 800 tornadoes strike the United States each year, on average. In the U.S., tornadoes are responsible for about 80 deaths annually, 1500 injuries, and many millions of dollars in property damage. While it is still impossible to predict exactly when and where tornadoes will strike, progress has been made in predicting tornado development and detecting tornadoes with Doppler radar.
- Tornadoes are commonly associated with the nation's heartland - in a 10-state area stretching from Texas to Nebraska that also includes Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Arkansas, known as Tornado Alley. Yet tornadoes have occurred in all 50 U.S. states.
- While most Americans were pre-occupied with the Super Tuesday elections, 79 tornadoes - many with winds exceeding 200 mph - struck ten Southern states, killing nearly 60 people.
- Since February 2007, storm experts have been using the [Enhanced Fujita Scale](#) to measure the relative sizes of tornadoes. The original Fujita Scale was developed in 1971 by Tetsuya Fujita at the University of Chicago. Fujita developed his scale based on damage, not wind speeds. Based on the extent of damage conclusions are drawn as to what the winds would likely have to be to cause that type of damage. Since two wooden structured homes can be vastly different in quality and strength, there can be some misleading conclusions from the damage. Because of this and other overly general conclusions, storm researchers came up with the Enhanced Fujita Scale to better reflect a tornado's strength.
- According to [Dr. Greg Forbes](#), Severe Weather Expert, the February 2008 outbreak was the largest February tornado outbreak on record (previous largest was in 1884) and third-deadliest. It was the deadliest tornado outbreak in the United States since May 31, 1985 when 76 people were killed in the United States (and 12 more in Canada). This year's outbreak included five tornadoes rated EF4 (1 in Arkansas, 2 in Tennessee, 2 in Alabama).
- Forbes noted the EF4 tornado in Arkansas in particular. It carved a continuous 123-mile damage path up to one-half mile wide. That is the longest path on record for that state and one of the longest in United States history. The longest known path was the Tri-State Tornado (MO-IL-IN) of March 18, 1925 which traveled at least 219 miles (some researchers now say at least 234 miles).
- [Tornado Tim Baker](#), a famous tornado chaser, keeps the best statistics about [past tornado locations and dates](#) on his website. According to Baker, April is the month most likely to produce the most violent tornadoes, but May will most likely produce the most tornadoes. Between 1959 and 2004, 9527 tornadoes were recorded in 48 states during the month of

May. Fifty-seven of these had a track length of greater than 50 miles. Tornadoes occurring in May have killed more than 600 people since 1959.

- NOAA Weather Radios manufactured by Midland Electronics and Oregon Scientific monitor alerts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. These radios can alert your organization to all kinds of emergencies, including tornadoes. They are especially useful for early tornado warnings. Once you input your regional code, you'll start receiving local warnings only - reducing false alarms.
- Another early warning system is based on RDS (Radio Data System) technology which provides the ability to send text messages as part of an FM broadcast. Brevard County, Florida has installed this kind of system in all of their public schools. Knowing what to do after a tornado strikes makes the recovery effort easier, quicker and safer. Common hazards during the aftermath include downed power lines, gas leaks, and loose debris that could fall.

Brain Teasers

True or False

1. Tornadoes often occur when it is not raining.
2. Since tornadoes tend to move from northeast to southwest, the best place to shelter in a building is in the southwest corner.
3. Tornadoes are more likely to occur in spring or summer and between 3 PM and 9 PM
4. If a tornado approaches your building, it is useful to open the windows to equalize the air pressure.
5. If you are in a high-rise building when a tornado approaches, you should go to the ground floor.

Check your answers here...

Answers to the above questions:

1. *True.* In fact, in semiarid regions, that scenario is the rule rather than the exception. In these locales, tornadoes are associated with a powerful updraft, so rain does not fall in or next to a tornado. Very large hail, however, does fall in the immediate area of the tornado. In humid environments, rain often tends to wrap around the tornado, being pulled from the main precipitation area around the outside of the rotating updraft. The rain can make it difficult to see the tornado.
2. *False.* It used to be advised to go to the southwest corner for safety; however historical information has shown that any corner on the lowest level away from windows is as safe as any other corner. If tornado winds enter the room, debris has a tendency to collect in corners. When selecting a tornado "safe place," look for a place on the lowest level and away from windows, preferably in a small room. Closer walls will help provide more support to the roof, and each wall between you and the outside will provide further protection.
3. *True.* Tornadoes generally occur during spring and summer, but they can happen any time of the year. While tornadoes can occur at any time of the day or night, they are most likely to occur between 3:00 and 9:00 p.m. There are no areas immune to tornadoes; they have been reported in mountains and valleys, over deserts and swamps, from the Gulf Coast into Canada, in Hawaii and even Alaska. Regardless of the location or time of year, if conditions are right, a tornado can happen.
4. *False.* Air pressure differences in a tornado are not strong enough to cause a building to explode; structures are damaged by the violent winds associated with a tornado and from the debris blown at high velocities by tornado winds.
5. *False.* You may not have enough time to go to the lowest floor. Center hallways on any floor are often structurally the most reinforced part of a building.

Readiness Check

Hard-to-remember details:

1. Strong winds frequently break weak limbs and hurl them at great speed, causing damage or injury when they hit. Do you regularly inspect your landscaping to prevent such occurrences?
2. If you have facilities in areas where tornadoes are likely to occur, do your plans address actions to take if the National Weather Service issues a Tornado Watch or Tornado Warning?
3. Does your equipment inventory include early warning technology, and have you learned about your community's early warning plans?
4. Do you have a designated Tornado Shelter in facilities that are likely to be hit by a tornado?
5. Do your plans describe actions to take during the aftermath of a tornado?

New from DSPN

Check these out on our website:

- Attending the Continuity Insights Conference in New Orleans this year? DSPN is staging a post-conference workshop at the conference hotel on May 8. [Click here for more details.](#)
- DSPN can provide a [customized tabletop exercise](#) at your site that will be very engaging for your executive team.
- Get your [free Tornado Safety Guide](#).

Comments and Contributions

Tell us what you think...



Thanks to all of you have sent us comments about this mailing.

In responding to recent incidents, did you discover an interesting detail that you would like to share with our readers? If so, send it along and we'll consider it for a
If you want us to print a comment or submission about your company, be sure to give us permission when you write.

[Paul Klier](#)

Popular Services from DSPN

- [Benchmark Your Program Using NFPA 1600](#) is a one-day workshop we are staging in New Orleans in conjunction with the Continuity Insights Conference. Sign up now!
- In addition to our public workshops, DSPN offers [on-site workshops](#) that are customized for your priorities.