

Don't Be Blown Away! Tornado Season Is In Full Swing -- Advance Planning and Quick Responses Are the Keys to Survival, Warns the I.I.I.

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Contact: Press Offices

New York: 212-346-5500, media@iii.org ^[1]

Wash. D.C.: 202-833-1580

NEW YORK, April 2, 2003 - April, May and June are peak months for tornadoes, according to the Insurance Information Institute (I.I.I.). Although these windstorms occur in almost every state, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska experience the most tornadoes.

The Institute urges homeowners to heed tornado warnings and to take action to protect themselves and their property from these violent windstorms.

Each year, one thousand tornadoes are reported in the United States. In 2002, there were over 843 tornadoes causing 55 deaths and thousands of injuries. Before the start of the 2003 tornado season, there have already been 60 of these windstorms resulting in 10 deaths. The largest tornado-related loss in U.S. history occurred in May 1999, when tornadoes struck 18 states including Kansas and Oklahoma, costing insurers nearly \$1.6 billion.

According to the I.I.I. property losses from tornadoes and windstorms are covered under standard auto, home and business insurance policies. Over the past 12 years, insurers paid out more than \$100 billion in catastrophe related claims - about \$700 million per month.

Homeowners insurance covers damage to both the structure of the home and personal belongings. There is also coverage for property damage under renters, condo/co-op and mobile home policies.

Compensation will be based on both the amount of insurance purchased and the type of policy selected. Replacement cost policies would generally provide reimbursement for the full value of the damage, while cash value policies will only provide reimbursement for its depreciated value.

If you are unable to live in your home because of tornado damage, you would also be covered for the cost of additional living expenses such as hotel, restaurants bills and other reasonable expenses. Tornado damage to vehicles is covered under the comprehensive portion of auto insurance policies.

Coverage for damage caused by tornadoes is covered by standard business owners' policies or BOPs. There would be coverage for the physical damage to business property, as well as business interruption which provides reimbursement for lost income. There may also be coverage for the extra expense of operating out of a temporary location, if the business is badly damaged by the tornado.

The wind speeds in most tornadoes are usually at or below design speeds in current building codes, according to the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS). That means a house or other structure built to code should stand up to the majority of tornadoes, if it is to the side of the tornado's path. While

it is impossible to build a tornado proof home, you can build or retrofit your home, at reasonable cost, to survive most of them, points out the IBHS.

When a tornado strikes, you have only a short amount of time to make life or death decisions. To protect yourself and your family, learn the difference between a tornado *watch* and a *warning*.

- A tornado *watch* means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes in your area.
- A tornado *warning* means one has been spotted in nearby. If a siren sounds, that means stay inside and take cover.

I.I.I. also suggests that you:

- Seek shelter in a central part of your home, away from windows, such as a bathroom, closet, or beneath a staircase. Basements are the best havens.
- Check tie-downs in mobile homes and leave immediately for a safe location.
- Move lawn furniture and yard equipment such as lawnmowers inside, if time permits. Otherwise they could become damaged or act as dangerous projectiles causing serious injury or damage. If possible, also move cars inside a garage or carport to avoid damage.
- Prepare for a tornado or other disaster by purchasing an appropriate amount of insurance and having an up-to-date inventory of your possession with a copy stored off premises. If your belongings are damaged, this list will help facilitate the claim. Also, keep emergency supplies handy such as cash, bottled water, flashlights and extra prescription drugs.

Consumers can get more information about insurance coverage for disasters by accessing I.I.I.'s Web site at <http://www.iii.org> [2]. For detailed information on protecting property against tornadoes and other windstorms, go to IBHS's Web site at <http://www.ibhs.org> [3].

The I.I.I. is a non-profit communications organization sponsored by the property/casualty insurance industry.

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