

News Release

Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management

Date: April 8, 2020

Contact: Keli Cain, (405) 590-0120

Agencies Provide Recommendations on Sheltering from Storms during COVID-19 Pandemic

This spring, the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM) and the National Weather Service (NWS) are offering the following guidance for how to take shelter from severe weather during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The need to practice social distancing and prevent the spread of COVID-19 brings added complications to taking shelter from severe weather. However, state and federal officials agree that your top priority should be to protect yourself from a potential tornado.

Officials recommend sheltering from tornadoes inside your home when possible. If you don't have a below-ground storm shelter, well-constructed homes and buildings provide life-saving protection from 98 percent of Oklahoma's tornadoes. Take shelter in a closet, bathroom, interior hallway or other interior room with no windows on the lowest level of the house or building.

If your family typically takes refuge in a public storm shelter in your community, first check with your community shelter managers to ensure the shelter will still be open and if there are any special considerations to plan for due to COVID-19.

Now is the time to explore the best options to keep you safer from severe weather as well as limit your exposure to the virus. Don't wait until a tornado warning is issued to make a plan.

Wherever you choose to shelter from a tornado, take as many precautions as possible to inhibit the spread of COVID-19 as best as you can, including Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations to wear a cloth face covering and maintain social distancing.

The best way to prepare for severe weather during a pandemic is to stay informed of the latest weather forecast from the NWS and local media as well as the latest recommendations regarding COVID-19 from the CDC, the Oklahoma State Department of Health, and local authorities.