



Tornado Safety

Last modified AUGUST 8 2023

The Rowan County Public Library (“the Library”) is aware that tornadoes have occurred locally in the past and strives to inform staff of proper safety procedures to mitigate potential injury and/or loss of life.

Considered nature’s most violent and erratic storm, tornadoes consist of whirling winds that can reach up to 300 miles per hour. They can sweep through an area, causing serious damage and destruction in their path, then change direction and strike again. Although they can appear at any time of year, tornadoes usually occur in the spring and summer seasons, developing primarily from severe thunderstorms. In addition to injuries, structural damage such as electrical shorts or gas leaks may create fires or other hazards.

Time is critical when dealing with a tornado; there may only be seconds to respond. Therefore, it is crucial that Library employees be familiar with this policy, regularly review the procedures described herein, and participate in tornado drills when administered.

TORNADO WATCH

A tornado **WATCH** occurs when weather conditions are considered favorable for the development of a tornado (e.g. during a spring thunderstorm).

When a tornado **WATCH** is issued, Library staff should:

- Monitor local weather reports; and
- check the premises and/or facility to remain aware of all visitors; and
- hang the provided tornado watch signage at the front entrance, facing inward so they may be easily read upon exit; and
- review the Library’s plan(s) for designated tornado shelter areas; and
- be prepared to act should conditions change and a tornado **WARNING** is issued.



Tornado Safety

Last modified AUGUST 8 2023

TORNADO WARNING

A tornado **WARNING** occurs when a tornado has been sighted or identified by radar in the area. When confronted with a tornado **WARNING**, Library staff and visitors should take shelter immediately, as tornadoes can develop and move quickly. Whenever severe thunderstorms occur, employees should remain alert to the fact that a thunderstorm may potentially trigger a tornado.

When a tornado **WARNING** is issued by public safety officials and/or the National Weather Service, employees should:

1. Direct visitors to proceed quickly and in an orderly fashion to the designated shelter areas rather than leaving the facility; and
2. aid persons with disabilities; and
3. turn off lights and close doors once all areas have been properly evacuated; and
4. remain in a shelter area until an "all clear" has been appropriately issued.

Regular library services will not be available during a tornado warning. Visitors who refuse to move to a safe area should be left, and employees should go to a designated shelter area. Uncooperative visitors will be addressed by the Executive Director following the emergency.

Promptly following a tornado **WARNING**, the staff member currently in charge of a facility will issue a statement through the public address (PA) system, which may be repeated several times as necessary. This staff member will be determined as follows:

- Executive Director; then
- Assistant Director; then
- Full-time staff member with most seniority; then
- Part-time staff member with most seniority

Sample Tornado Announcement

"Attention, please. A tornado warning has been issued for the Rowan County area until [TIME OF EXPIRY]. All staff and visitors should move directly to our designated tornado shelter areas in the



Tornado Safety

Last modified AUGUST 8 2023

public restrooms and conference room. Staff will assist those in need. Please remain in the building; do not go outside. Everyone is asked to remain in the designated shelter areas until an 'all clear' has been issued by Library personnel."

DESIGNATED SHELTER AREAS

The locations within the main library facility designated as safest for occupants during a tornado situation are:

- The public restrooms; and
- the conference room; and
- the staff restroom.

OUTDOOR PROCEDURES

If a staff member is outside when a tornado occurs and is unable to take shelter indoors, they are advised to lie flat in a ditch or depression and protect their head. Large trees, metal poles, and other electrical conductors should be avoided. Vehicles should not be used as shelter.