Tornadoes can happen at any time of the year, and at any time during the day or night. Though more common in the afternoon and evening hours, tornadoes can happen and have been reported at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

Many people think a tornado is always visible, but there are times, in storms which have high amounts of precipitation, it can be completely wrapped in rain, making it indistinguishable from surrounding clouds. Contrary to what some may believe, tornadoes can and do cross rivers, mountains, and big cities. For these reasons, it is very important to have a plan of action in case of a tornado.

What should one do when a tornado is approaching or a warning has been issued? SEEK SHELTER IMMEDIATELY! Once in shelter, take the protection position.

Where to go

• Reinforced shelters—A basement or underground shelter is the best option. Protect your head and eyes from deadly flying debris. If no basement is available, go to an interior area on the lowest floor – such as a bathroom or closet. If possible get under something sturdy like a bench or table. Stay away from windows.

• If you cannot quickly walk to a shelter, immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. You do have the following options as a last resort: Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.

If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

Never seek shelter under a bridge or overpass. Your choice should be driven by your specific

circumstances.

The important thing to understand is that if you find yourself outside or in a car and you are unable to get to a safe shelter, you are at risk from a number of things outside your control, such as the strength and path of the tornado and debris from your surroundings. This is the case whether you stay in your car or seek shelter in a depression or ditch, both of which are considered last resort options that provide little protection.

The safest place to be is always an underground shelter, basement or safe room.

Evacuate mobile homes immediately. Mobile homes are particularly vulnerable to overturning and destruction from strong winds and tornadoes. Tie-downs generally will not protect a mobile home from tornadoes.

If possible, leave the mobile home and go to a community shelter. If none is available, a ditch, culvert, or other low lying area may offer better protection.

Have a plan of action prepared before a storm hits. At school, work, shopping or in other buildings—stay indoors. Avoid cars, buses, or any other vehicle.

Follow plans made in advance to go to a basement, an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor. Avoid the end of any hallway that opens to the outside as well as rooms with windows or outside walls. Stay out of auditoriums or any other structure with wide free-span roofs, as these types of structures are quite vulnerable to tornadic winds. Once you are in shelter, crouch down and cover your head.