



Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Melbourne FL
800 AM EST Wed Feb 5 2025

...Wednesday February 5 is Tornado and Thunderstorm Awareness Day...

Tornadoes are more frequent in east central Florida than many people realize. Most of our tornadoes occur during the wet season which typically runs from late May through mid October. These tornadoes are usually small and brief, resulting in little property damage and are not a significant threat to life. However, large, long track and deadly tornadoes have occurred in east central Florida during the dry season, in the late winter and early spring, especially when El Niño conditions are in place.

The deadliest tornado outbreak in Florida's history occurred the night of February 22, 1998. Several large tornadoes swept across central Florida killing 42 people, destroying 700 structures, and causing an estimated 100 million dollars in damage. Three of the tornadoes were rated EF-3 intensity while another two tornadoes were rated as EF-2. These tornadoes occurred late at night when people were sleeping, which likely contributed to the large number of fatalities.

Additionally, deadly tornadoes have occurred when tropical cyclones are in the vicinity of the state. Last year, as Hurricane Milton approached the west coast of Florida, an unprecedented tornado outbreak occurred across central and south Florida. A total of 42 tornadoes occurred within a 12-hour period as the outer rainbands swept across the area, resulting in 6 fatalities, all of which occurred in mobile and manufactured homes.

Tornadoes form with much less advance warning than hurricanes, but even a few minutes can make the difference between life and death. Having multiple ways to receive hazardous weather information is a critical component of the warning system. A NOAA Weather Radio that provides an alert of an approaching tornado can save your life especially in the middle of the night. Cell phone Wireless Emergency Alerts also provide advance notice when tornado warnings are issued. When a tornado threatens your area, stay inside and go to an interior room without windows, on the lowest floor. Abandon mobile homes for a pre identified sturdy building nearby.

Severe thunderstorm and tornado warnings are communicated directly from the Melbourne Forecast Office to local media via the Emergency Alert System, to NOAA Weather Radio, to cell phones through Wireless Emergency Alerts, and to the internet at www.weather.gov/mlb.