Tornado Plan

July 1, 2026

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air that extends from the clouds to the ground and is often, although not always, visible as a funnel cloud. Lightning and hail are common in storms that produce tornadoes. Tornadoes can happen anytime and anywhere.

Tornadoes may strike quickly, with little to no warning, causing extensive damage to structures and disrupting transportation, power, water, gas, communications and other services in its direct path and in neighboring areas. Tornados may bring intense winds, over 200mph.

Preparing for a Tornado

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management recommends the following actions in order to better prepare for a tornado:

- Identify safe rooms or protected locations at home, school or work before a tornado threat arises so that you have a plan for where to go for safety when a tornado warning is issued.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions and tune into NOAA weather radio, local media and social media for the latest information.
- Look for the following danger signs: dark, often greenish sky, large hail, large, dark, low-lying cloud formation or rotation, or a loud roar similar to a freight train.
- Have an emergency communication plan in place for your family.

Community Alert of Tornado Warning

If a tornado warning is issued for our campus, an RBC Alert notification will be transmitted to the College community. In addition, a siren will sound for approximately 60 seconds indicating this warning. The Department of Campus Safety & Police communications will announce these warnings through the RBC Alert Notification System.

Procedures

If the area is under a Tornado WARNING, seek shelter immediately!

- If you are on campus between buildings when the tornado siren sounds, move quickly to the nearest building and seek refuge in the building.
    - Locate an appropriate area capable of providing protection from the event:
        - Hardened structure
        - Interior hallway or room
        - Free of windows or other glass structures
        - At the lowest level possible in the building – use stairs, do NOT use elevators
- Go to the center of the room, away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls.
- If possible, get under a sturdy table. Use your arms to protect your head and neck. Protect your body from flying debris with any available furniture or sturdy equipment.
- Do NOT open windows.

- Take account of your co-workers and/or students and attempt to locate missing persons if safety permits.

Below is a list of buildings and locations within the buildings where occupants shall seek refuge in the event of a tornado or tornado drill. Once you arrive at the predetermined location, sit in a crouched position on the floor with knees touching the ground. Bend your head toward your knees while covering the top of the head with your hands and arms. All individuals shall stay in this predetermined location and be seated in this position until an all-clear is signaled by the RBC Alert Notification System.

Maze Hall:
All occupants shall move to the hallway in the basement and/or any other area in the basement away from windows.

Pecan Hall:
All occupants on the first floor shall remain in the room you are in and seek cover against the wall farthest from any windows. Persons on the second floor shall move to the first-floor hallway for refuge.

Barn:
All occupants shall move to the back-area rooms behind the stage (formally the Green Room/costume storage area). All overflows will move to the restrooms.

Grounds Department:
All occupants shall evacuate to the Barn, if deemed safe, and follow the Barn procedure.

Maintenance Shop:
All occupants shall move to the restrooms.

McNeer Hall:
All occupants will move to the lowest level hallway and as far away from the end windows and main staircase as possible. Restrooms on each floor should also be used for additional sheltering.

Ernst Hall:
All occupants shall move to the auditorium on the first floor. All overflows will move to the restrooms.

Library and Commons:
All occupants shall move to the restrooms located on the first floor of the library and Parsons Café areas. If the restrooms will not provide enough room for everyone, occupants will seek refuge in the Community Room along the walls and in the break room. As a last resort refuge can be taken under library tables away from windows.

Statesman Hall:
All occupants shall seek shelter in the locker rooms or in the restrooms in the middle of the building.

Patriot Hall:
Resident Advisors will direct residents to the nearest stairwell in the middle and on each side of the building. Residents will move to the lowest level in the stairwell as possible. The first-floor occupants may also use the men's and women's restrooms.

Freedom Hall:
Resident Advisors will direct residents to the nearest stairwell in the middle and on each side of the building. Residents will move to the lowest level in the stairwell as possible. The first-floor occupants may also use the men's and women's restrooms.

For more information on tornadoes and properness, please visit the Virginia Department of Emergency Management website at https://www.vaemergency.gov/threats/tornadoes/