

Tornado Scientists



Tornadoes form when strong winds spin. Wind is invisible, but we can see tornadoes because the spinning wind picks up water, dust, and debris. The spinning wind forms a funnel that connects thunderstorm clouds with the ground.

When a tornado is close, watch out. They can spin over 200 miles per hour and cause a lot of damage. As they move across the land, they can easily pick up cars, trucks, and even houses, and then throw them very far. It is important to find a safe place to take shelter if a tornado gets close.

A safe place could be a basement or the lowest floor, depending on where you are. If you are in a home without a basement, try to find a first-floor closet or bathroom without windows in the middle of your house. You should curl up into a ball and cover your head and neck with your hands. Stay in a safe place until the tornado passes.

But there are some people who actually want to get close to tornadoes. They are scientists who want to learn more about tornadoes. One of the best ways to do this is to get as close as possible to these twisters. They use special equipment and instruments to measure what is happening in and around a tornado.

One special instrument these scientists use is called a tornado probe. It is about six inches tall and looks like a short, orange construction cone. Inside the tornado probe, there

are sensors to measure wind speed, temperature, pressure, and direction. Some probes even have cameras, so the scientists can see and understand what it's like to be in a tornado.

To be able to get these measurements, the scientists have to get a tornado probe near or into a tornado. Scientists will try to guess where a tornado will go next. Then they drive to that location and put down the probe. If they do not guess correctly, they pick up their probe and try another spot. If they are right, the tornado will go near or even right over the probe. Then they take all of the measurements from the probe and use them to predict where future tornadoes may form and travel.

Tornadoes are extremely dangerous, and the scientists who study them up-close are bold and brave. Their work is very important and has saved lives by giving people some warning to get out of the way of a destructive tornado.