

Tornado Facts

1. What is a tornado?

It is a column of violently rotating winds extending down from a thunderstorm cloud and touching the surface of the earth.

2. What is the difference between a tornado and a funnel cloud?

A funnel cloud is also a column of violently rotating winds extending down from a thunderstorm; however, it does not touch the earth.

3. How many tornadoes usually occur in Michigan every year?

An average of 16 tornadoes occurs in Michigan each year. Since 1950, 239 persons have been killed due to tornadoes. During this same time, Michigan has experienced 874 tornadoes.

4. When do tornadoes generally occur?

Most tornadoes occur during the months of May, June, July, and August in the late afternoon and evening hours. However, tornadoes can occur anytime of the day or night in almost any month during the year.

5. How fast do tornadoes travel?

Tornadoes generally travel from the southwest and at an average speed of 30 miles per hour. However, some tornadoes have very erratic paths, with speeds approaching 70 mph.

6. How far do tornadoes travel once they touch the ground?

The average Michigan tornado is on the ground for less than 10 minutes and travels a distance of about 5 miles. However, they do not always follow the norm and have been known to stay on the ground for more than an hour and travel more than 100 miles.

7. What is a tornado watch?

A tornado/severe thunderstorm watch is issued whenever conditions exist for severe weather to develop. Watches are usually for large areas about two-thirds the size of Lower Michigan and are usually two to six hours long. Watches give us time to plan and prepare.

8. What is a tornado warning?

The local Weather Service (NWS) office issues a tornado warning whenever a tornado has been sighted or NWS Doppler Radar indicates a thunderstorm capable of producing a tornado has been sighted. A severe thunderstorm warning is issued whenever a severe thunderstorm is observed or NWS Doppler Radar indicates a thunderstorm capable of producing damaging winds or large hail is

observed. Warnings are for smaller areas, such as counties, and are usually 30 to 90 minutes in length. You must act immediately when you first hear the warning. If severe weather is reported near you, seek shelter immediately. If not, keep a constant lookout for severe weather and stay near a shelter.

9. How do I find out about a warning if my electricity is already out?

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards with battery backup capability is your best source to receive the warning. In some areas, civil emergency sirens may be your first official warning. In addition, if your television or radio has battery backup capability, you may receive NOAA's National Weather Service warnings from local media.

Michigan Tornado Chart

The following is a list of tornadoes experienced by each county in Michigan.

| County | 1950-2005 | 2005 | County | 1950-2005 | 2005 |
|----------------|-----------|------|--------------|-----------|------|
| Alcona | 10 | 0 | Lake | 2 | 1 |
| Alger | 6 | 1 | Lapeer | 19 | 0 |
| Allegan | 24 | 0 | Leelanau | 3 | 0 |
| Alpena | 12 | 0 | Lenawee | 30 | 0 |
| Antrim | 8 | 0 | Livingston | 23 | 0 |
| Arenac | 6 | 0 | Luce | 2 | 0 |
| Baraga | 2 | 0 | Mackinac | 5 | 0 |
| Barry | 17 | 0 | Macomb | 18 | 0 |
| Bay | 12 | 0 | Manistee | 1 | 0 |
| Benzie | 4 | 0 | Marquette | 6 | 0 |
| Berrien | 28 | 0 | Mason | 4 | 0 |
| Branch | 15 | 0 | Mecosta | 9 | 0 |
| Calhoun | 15 | 0 | Menominee | 6 | 0 |
| Cass | 14 | 0 | Midland | 8 | 0 |
| Charlevoix | 4 | 0 | Missaukee | 8 | 0 |
| Cheboygan | 5 | 0 | Monroe | 27 | 0 |
| Chippewa | 6 | 0 | Montcalm | 10 | 0 |
| Clare | 7 | 0 | Montmorency | 6 | 0 |
| Clinton | 17 | 0 | Muskegon | 7 | 0 |
| Crawford | 10 | 0 | Newaygo | 12 | 1 |
| Delta | 10 | 0 | Oakland | 30 | 0 |
| Dickinson | 7 | 0 | Oceana | 5 | 0 |
| Eaton | 22 | 0 | Ogemaw | 13 | 0 |
| Emmet | 5 | 0 | Ontonagon | 2 | 0 |
| Genesee | 39 | 0 | Osceola | 15 | 0 |
| Gladwin | 9 | 0 | Oscoda | 3 | 0 |
| Gogebic | 3 | 1 | Otsego | 3 | 0 |
| Grand Traverse | 4 | 0 | Ottawa | 18 | 0 |
| Gratiot | 12 | 0 | Presque Isle | 6 | 0 |
| Hillsdale | 23 | 0 | Roscommon | 8 | 0 |
| Houghton | 1 | 0 | Saginaw | 21 | 1 |
| Huron | 11 | 0 | Sanilac | 13 | 0 |
| Ingham | 24 | 0 | Schoolcraft | 3 | 0 |
| Ionia | 16 | 0 | Shiawassee | 23 | 0 |
| Iosco | 11 | 0 | St. Clair | 20 | 0 |
| Iron | 5 | 0 | St. Joseph | 9 | 0 |
| Isabella | 13 | 0 | Tuscola | 15 | 0 |
| Jackson | 16 | 0 | Van Buren | 16 | 0 |
| Kalamazoo | 21 | 0 | Washtenaw | 22 | 0 |
| Kalkaska | 6 | 0 | Wayne | 27 | 0 |
| Kent | 30 | 0 | Wexford | 6 | 0 |
| Keweenaw | 2 | 0 | | | |

***A single tornado can cross county lines. Therefore, the sum of the counties will not equal the state totals.**