



# Victim Services of Waterloo Region

Tornado Preparedness pt. 2/2

## After a Tornado

After you feel that it is safe to leave your protected area, do so carefully. Structural damage is not uncommon, and there may be rain water and debris present in your home. In extreme cases parts of your home may have been dismantled, exposing you to outdoor storm elements. It may be wise to send an adult out to inspect the premises before bringing the entire family out.

If you smell gas or chemical fumes in the building you are in, leave immediately! Open a window and exit the home, turning off the gas at the outside main valve. Call the gas company from a neighbour's home - you will need to call them if you turn off your gas for any reason, but it is better to err on the side of caution and avoid an explosion.

Check your home for electrical system damage, such as frayed wires, sparks and smells that might indicate hot insulation or a fire. If you find any of these problems, turn off your electricity at the main circuit breaker or fuse box. If there is water on the floor, don't touch anything until you've called an electrician first!

If you think that there may be any damage to sewers or water lines, avoid using your toilet and water faucets. For a safe water source you can rely on water bottles or melt ice cubes from your freezer.

If there are no extenuating circumstances such as a gas leak or flooding, listen to the radio or television before leaving – unless there is major damage and it is safer to try to leave. Clean up any dangerous spills such as medicine, flammable or bleaching agents. Avoid using the telephone unless it is an emergency. If you have a camera available, remember to take photos of the home and its contents for insurance purposes before cleaning and repairing the damage.

If it is safe for you to move around, help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid if you know how to do so, but never move someone who is seriously injured – you could make it worse, so call for help and wait for emergency services to arrive. If you have neighbours who may require assistance, remember to check on them (eg. the elderly, persons with special needs, infants, single parents with multiple children and people with multiple pets).

After the tornado has passed and it is safe to venture outdoors, remember to move around with extreme caution. There may be fallen trees, downed power lines and a great deal of debris present, so wear the safest shoes you have (steel toed boots are a wise choice) and look before you step. Do not allow children and pets to play outdoors until you are sure that there is no threat of continued tornado activity, and have scoured your yard to remove all debris and dangers present – it is wise to wait a few days, and to supervise all outdoor time carefully!

## Making Repairs

The structural repairs needed after a tornado can be great, and you will want to repair your home as soon as possible in order to keep your family safe.

Many of us are not financially prepared for disasters, and will be in need of assistance to pay for repairs to our properties. If you have homeowners insurance it is recommended that you call your insurance company immediately to file a claim. An adjuster will arrive to examine the damage and determine what your payout will be.

If your repair costs exceed what you are capable of paying you may be eligible to receive government financial assistance from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program. This program

is intended to cover the costs of returning essential items to pre-disaster condition for people who have suffered damage in designated disaster areas, but is not a substitute or alternative to having insurance coverage. The program covers primary residence's, small businesses, farms and non-profit organizations, and aids recipients in restoring their property to its condition pre-disaster. Forms can be obtained online, or by calling the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing directly.

Agencies such as the Red Cross can also be of assistance, including providing the means for individuals and families to pay for what they need most – from groceries, new clothes, and rent to emergency home repairs, transportation, household items, medicines, and tools.

There are also emergency services that assist in making emergency repairs to roofs and structural damage, which can often be found through contacts in your community and church. If you have construction, office or cooking skills, or a whole lot of enthusiasm, please consider volunteering for one of these worthwhile organizations.

Once you are ready to make repairs to your home, if you are not being assisted by an emergency repair service you will need to find a reputable contractor to make the repairs. Remember that it is still wise to get a written estimate, telephone their references and read over the contract carefully before signing it. Don't forget to ask if they plan to subcontract their work, and to call the sub-contractor's references as well.

Before you being repairs, you will need to contact your local building authority to ensure that the proposed repairs and improvements to your home comply with the Ontario Building Code. Once your plans are approved, you will obtain a permit to carry them out – this will help to ensure that your work is carried out in a

professional manner, and that the end result will be safe for you and your family to live in. In order to obtain a permit, please call:

**Cambridge – (519) 740-4613**

**Kitchener – (519) 741-2433**

**Waterloo – (519) 747-8712**

**Township of North Dumfries – (519) 621-0340 x 13**

**Township of Wellesley – (519) 699-4611**

**Township of Wilmot – (519) 634-8444**

**Township of Woolwich – (519) 669-8706 x 234**

## Damage Unseen

Not all damage stemming from a tornado is of a physical nature. While property damage and personal injury can be devastating, the residual emotional effects of disasters can be just as intense.

Many people have a hard time coping with the aftermath of disaster - if you are having a hard time you are not alone! You can call Victim Services 24 hours a day to discuss your concerns with a trained volunteer.

## Resources

### **Mennonite Disaster Service**

1-866-261-1274

[www.mds.mennonite.net](http://www.mds.mennonite.net)

### **Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**

(416) 585-7041

[www.mah.gov.on.ca](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca)

### **The Red Cross**

Cambridge – (519) 621-1840

Kitchener-Waterloo – (519) 742-2785

[www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)



## Victim Services of Waterloo Region

North: 45 Columbia St. E. Waterloo, ON  
Central: 134 Frederick St. Kitchener, ON  
South: 176 Hespeler Rd. Cambridge, ON

Phone: 519-585-2363  
After-Hours: 519-570-5143  
Email: [vswr@wrps.on.ca](mailto:vswr@wrps.on.ca)  
Website: [www.vswr.ca](http://www.vswr.ca)