

Life-saving tips for tornado season

Old-timers say only a fool forecasts the weather in Texas, but you'll notice they watch the skies anyway. Keeping your eyes and ears open can save your life during tornado season, two Texas A&M University meteorologists said.

Tornado season officially opens Sunday, and newcomers and natives should keep an eye on the sky and an ear on emergency broadcast channels, said Vance Mayer and J.C. Conglose. Several funnels have already been spotted this year, they said.

Conglose and Mayer help coordinate emergency Civil Defense activities in Brazos County, and with the sophisticated weather radar setup on the Texas A&M campus, they have prepared some pointers for facing killer storms:

—Listen for warning broadcasts, especially if the area is already experiencing a heavy thunderstorm, dark, ominous clouds or unusually smoggy, still conditions.

—Use the radio or television broadcast to plot the location and direction of the storm. Persons outside the immediate area should stay clear and those in the area should take cover immediately, even without an issued warning.

A tornado watch, they explained, means the severe storms are possible. A tornado warning means one has been sighted.

If caught in the path of a tornado, they said, do the following:

—In homes and small buildings, go to the basement or interior part on the lowest level such as closets, bathrooms or halls. Get under something sturdy. Stay away from windows and doors.

—In public places go to pre-designated shelters or interior hallways on the lowest floor or basement.

—In high-rise buildings, go to interior rooms and halls.

—In mobile homes or vehicles, leave for better shelter. If there is no shelter, lie flat in a nearby ditch, ravine, or culvert and shield your head with your hands. Protecting the head in all these situations is vital, explained the pair.

Since flooding, thunderstorms and lightning may occur before, during or after the tornado, persons should be aware of other safety precautions, Conglose and Moyer said.

Watch the skies, listen to the broadcasts and stay away from flood-

ing areas, they advised. Do not try to drive through water, especially at night when it is impossible to tell how deep the water is. Head for high ground, they said.

If caught outside with no time to reach shelter, keep away from open water and metal equipment likely to attract lightning and if in an open field when lightning is about to strike, squat. Don't lie down flat, they said.

First aid is important, said the Texas A&M officials.

People apparently "killed" by lightning can be revived if quick ac-

tion is taken, primarily mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If victims have neither pulse nor breathing, cardiopulmonary resuscitation is probably necessary, they said.

Medical attention should also be given to victims who appear only stunned, they said, since there may be hidden effects.

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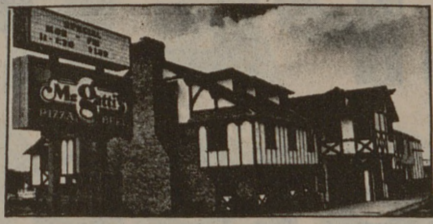
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