

# Prepare for Tornado Season

During the afternoon of April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002, a powerful spring-time low-pressure system developed across the eastern U.S. By the evening of April 28<sup>th</sup> weather experts were not expecting an unprecedented tornado that would cross two states and the Chesapeake Bay. The damage path covered more than 250 miles, from Virginia to Eastern shore Maryland. It's been roughly 75 years since we had a tornado in a single weather phenomenon. 5 people lost their lives, numerous people were injured and several billions of dollars in damages were sustained to homes and businesses.

## Tornadoes Facts

- They are known to strike quickly, with little or no warning
- They appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel
- The average tornado moves west to east, but can move in any direction
- The average speed of a tornado is 30 mph to 70 mph
- Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land
- Peak tornado season is late spring through early summer
- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 pm and 9 pm.

## Tornado terminology

- **Tornado Watch** – weather conditions are suitable for tornadoes to form. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Weather Radio, commercial radio, the internet or television for information
- **Tornado Warning** – a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar in your area. Take shelter immediately.

## Taking Shelter

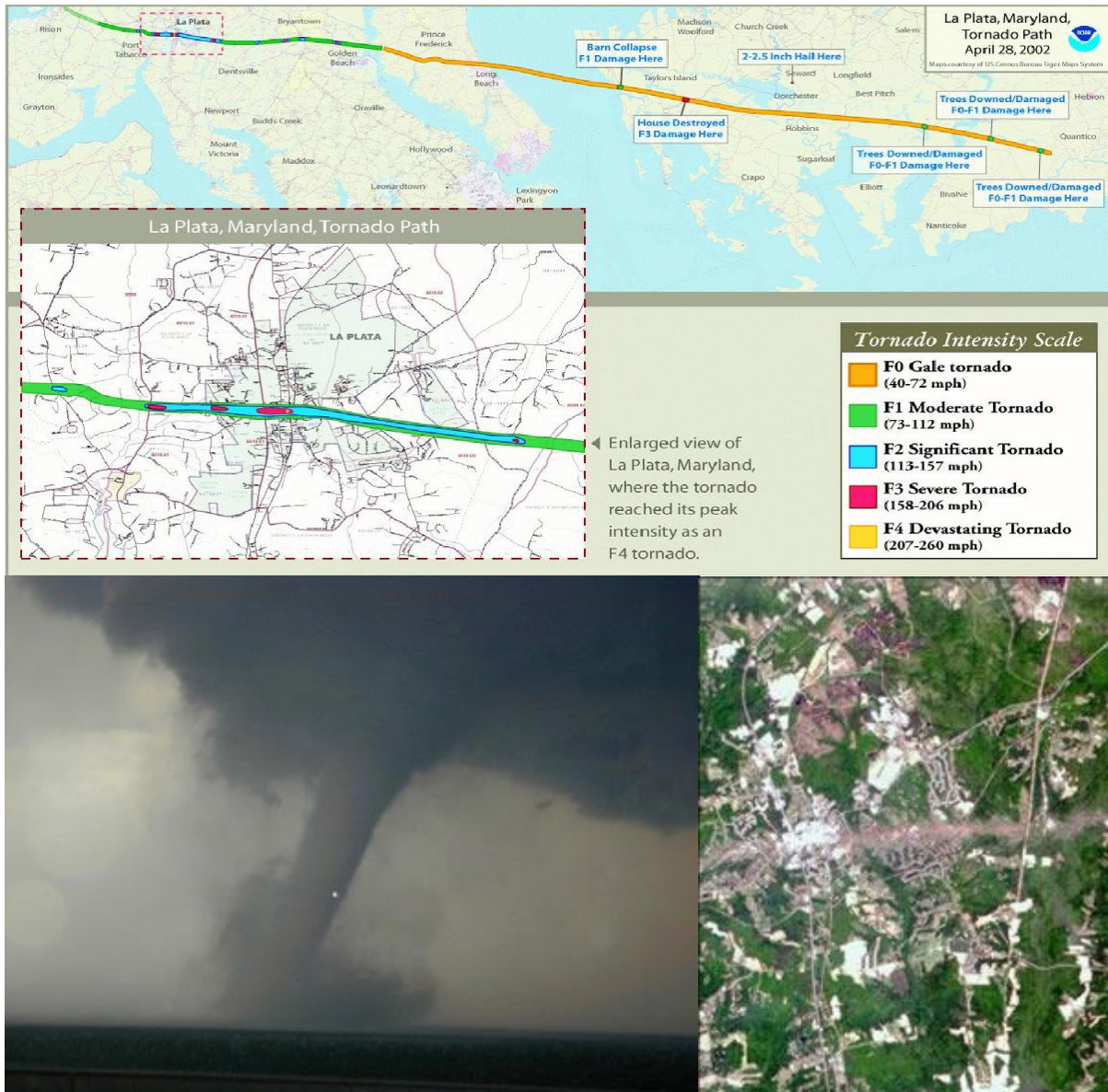
If you see approaching storms or any of the tornado danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately. If you are in a building, or a school, follow these guidelines:

- Go to a pre-designated shelter area such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar or the lowest building level.
- If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls.
- Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside
- Get under a sturdy table or desk and use your arms to protect your head and neck.
- Do not open windows.

Does your school district have an emergency plan in the event of a tornado warning or a tornado touchdown and are you aware of employees, students and visitors with disabilities and other special needs? Do you have a plan for them? And the most important question is has all the plans been tested?

# La Plata Tornado - April 28, 2002

April 28, 2012 marks the twelve year anniversary of one of the strongest tornadoes to hit the greater Baltimore-Washington D.C. area. During the early evening a devastating tornado with a peak rating of F4 on the Fujita (F) scale\* tracked from Virginia through Southern Maryland and into eastern shore. Though F4 tornadoes are uncommon, even rarer with this event was its location well outside of the climatologically favored area of the country for violent tornadoes.



## The La Plata Tornado -- 1926

Seventy six years earlier a La Plata Elementary School was destroyed by a tornado on November 9, 1926. Thirteen pupils and four townspeople lost their lives and approximately thirty-five were injured. The school stood 433 feet northwest of this site on a rise in a residential area near the junction of Wicomico and Somerset Streets. The tornado roared into La Plata from the southwest at 2:30 p.m. It picked up the schoolhouse containing 60 children and their teachers and hurled it 50 feet into a grove of trees.