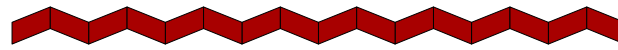




## Tornado Shelter Selection Criteria



### Office of Safety and Security Fact Sheet



Woodson High School damaged by F3 strength tornado on April 1, 1973

Every year Virginia experiences the effects of tornado damage. While not common, fatalities and injuries have occurred. **In order ensure a rapid and effective response to the threat from a tornado, Fairfax County Public Schools are required to practice a minimum of one tornado drill annually any day in March.**

A Tornado Drill Report must be submitted (after the March drill) using the Safety and Transportation Online Drill Reporting form on the FCPSnet. Regulation 8625 provides procedures and responsibilities designed to provide protection from tornadoes and other severe storms. Additional severe weather information is available on the Office of Safety and Security FCPSnet Weather Safety web page.

In preparation for a tornado drill, proper shelter areas must be selected and their use explained to students and staff. The following criteria should be used when selecting the best available shelter space in schools.

- **USE THE GROUND FLOOR** Storm winds are much stronger 25 feet above the ground. Everyone on the second floor must evacuate and seek refuge on the lowest floor in the school.
- **USE HALLWAYS** Ground level hallways provide a high level of protection. Avoid areas of hallways that are close to exterior windows. Often this is difficult to do, but effort should be made to maintain at least a 50 foot distance from windows and doors with glass.
- **USE WINDOWLESS ROOMS** Ground floor rooms without windows, even if they have exterior walls, provide good shelter.
- **USE THE ELEVATOR TO EVACUATE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** Persons unable to use the stairs to evacuate the second floor should use the elevator to seek shelter on the ground floor. If the power should fail, the generator should activate to provide emergency power. If that fails, the air supply in the elevator will provide many hours of comfortable breathing. The steel cab and concrete shaft offer some of the best protection from tornadoes.
- **AVOID TEMPORARY BUILDINGS** Classroom trailers and modular buildings offer very little protection from tornadoes. All occupants must evacuate these structures and seek the safety that is provided by the masonry constructed main school building.
- **AVOID WINDOWS** Move all occupants away from exterior windows. Many injuries from tornadoes are from broken glass. There was once a belief that windows were “sucked out” of buildings from the low air pressure from a tornado. It is now understood that windows are broken by small debris traveling at a high rate of speed.
- **AVOID LARGE CAPACITY ROOMS** Any room with a wide free-span ceiling, such as gymnasiums, auditoriums, and cafeterias, must be avoided. These ceilings are often the weakest part of the roof.
- **AVOID BOILER AND MECHANICAL ROOMS** If a school is damaged by a tornado, these rooms may become extremely hazardous.

If you need assistance, call the Office of Safety and Security at 571-423-2010.