

Learning more about tornado experiences to improve safety

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A tornado destroyed this home in Sawyerville, Alabama, on March 25, 2021.
Credit: NOAA

Has a tornado hit your house or your community? Have you received a tornado alert? NOAA scientists want to hear your story.

The new Tornado Tales citizen science tool is an [online survey](#) that provides a way for people to anonymously report their tornado experiences. Developed by researchers at the NOAA National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL), the tool will be used to better understand how people receive, interpret and respond to tornado information from NOAA.

The survey asks basic questions to collect information about an individual's responses to warnings and watches, including how they prepared for and monitored the weather and what safe space they used to shelter when a warning was issued by NOAA's National Weather Service. This information can help NOAA identify areas where warning messages may not be resulting in the most safe and effective actions. This knowledge will help NOAA hone safety messages.

"While NOAA collects a lot of physical science data about storms from satellites and radars, the weather community has much less information about what people actually do when tornadoes strike," said project coordinator Justin Sharpe, research scientist with the Cooperative Institute for Severe and High-Impact Weather Research and Operations (CIWRO) working at the NOAA NSSL. "We created this citizen science tool so that people can come to us and share their stories. This information will help us improve weather communication used to keep people safe."

"Understanding people's experiences gives scientists a much better picture of where research is needed, whether it's research to improve safety messages or to assess the need for local changes, such as developing reasonable shelter options," Sharpe added.

Like the sensors meteorologists use to study the atmosphere, Tornado Tales is designed to gather information, in this case about what people affected by [weather](#) are really doing and generate a more robust set of

observations than NOAA [social scientists](#) currently have available.

The information gathered by the Tornado Tales tool can also be used by other social scientists, local emergency managers and NOAA's National Weather Service forecasters to inform research and community engagement activities.

To share your story, visit <https://apps.nssl.noaa.gov/tornado-theses/survey>

Provided by NOAA Headquarters

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