

## Tornado Warnings – What They Mean

A **tornado watch** indicates that weather conditions exist that may create tornadoes or severe thunderstorms in the watch area. Watches are usually issued for periods of 4 hours or less.

A watch does not mean that a tornado has been sighted. Residents of the designated watch area need not seek shelter or disrupt their normal routine during the tornado watch, but they should tune in to TV, NOAA radio or local radio stations to be alert for worsening weather. Warning time periods are often extended or terminated early, depending on the development of any threatening weather.

The National Weather Service offices issue **tornado warnings** when a tornado has actually been

sighted or indicated by radar. The warning may cover periods of less than one hour and is usually issued for small areas, usually parts of specified counties. The warning will indicate where the tornado was detected, when detected and the area through which it is expected to advance.

A tornado warning advises persons in the expected path of the storm to take shelter immediately. During one storm in 1997, 16 tornadoes were responsible for 25 deaths in Arkansas. The Little Rock National Weather Service issued 34 tornado warnings. The lead times for the communities where the deaths and majority of the injuries occurred was from 9 to 28 minutes, based on the first tornado warning issued for that immediate area.