

Unit 10: Tornado Terror

Narrator: Sometimes called twisters, tornadoes are clouds of fast spinning wind that can destroy homes and lives.

Here are some facts about tornadoes you might not know. Tornadoes can travel at speeds of over 170 kmph. They can also be very wide. The widest tornado ever recorded, near El Reno in Oklahoma, was 2.6 miles (over four kilometers) wide. That's wider than Manhattan, New York.

Scientists have learnt a lot about how tornadoes in the U.S. usually form. Warm wet air from the sea, cool air from the North, and dry air from the mountains, meet to create the perfect conditions for a tornado. Nearly three quarters of the world's tornadoes occur in the United States. Most of these occur between May and June, in a place called Tornado Alley. But tornadoes have been recorded all over the U.S., and on every continent except Antarctica.

Tornadoes are very dangerous, and they can form very quickly. The average time between a tornado warning and a strike is usually thirteen minutes or less. So people have little time to find a safe place. In the U.S., tornadoes kill sixty people every year. But the deadliest tornado in history occurred in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1989. It killed around 1,300 people.

Scientists measure the damage a tornado causes using the EF scale. It ranks tornadoes on six different levels from zero, a heavy wind, to level five, enough wind to pick up a house. In order to save lives, we need to understand tornadoes better. So, many scientists continue to study them, sometimes risking their own lives to do so.