Protect Yourself Before Disaster Strikes

Tornados that have recently devastated parts of the Midwest could pop up anywhere. While there is generally little to no warning before these storms strike, there are some steps you can take to protect your family and your home from disaster.

1: Construct a safe room

Homeowners living in an area known for tornados should consider a safe room, which is built to withstand wind speeds of over 250 miles per hour. Usually, a safe room is located in a central, ground-floor area of the home for additional protection as well as accessibility. To find out more about safe room plans, check out the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov.

2: Reinforce the garage

Most residential tornado damage starts when wind enters through the garage, so you should make sure your garage doors are reinforced.

A qualified contractor can determine if the garage door system is able to resist high-speed winds and, if necessary, replace it with a stronger system. If your garage doors are more than eight feet wide, you should consider installing permanent wood or metal stiffeners.

3: Install impact resistant doors and windows

If you are replacing your patio doors or building a new home, consider installing impact-resistant doors made of laminated glass, plastic glazing or a combination of plastic and glass.

Likewise, if you're thinking about replacing your home's windows, be sure to install impact-resistant windows.

4: Remove clutter from the yard

Keeping your yard free of debris can also help to minimize storm damage. Prune weak branches and remove trees that could fall on your house. If you use gravel or rock landscaping material, consider replacing it with mulch.