

presentation on the topic  
**Tornado**

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A tornado is a very, very strong wind that goes round and round in the shape of a tall, thin, chimney. In the centre of the tornado is a vacuum, which causes very high air pressure. The air in the centre goes round and round at a fantastic speed – the wind speed at the centre can be over 480 kilometres per hour.



Tornadoes are common in the Midwest of the USA, where they can cause great damage to buildings and injury to people. It is very difficult to know when a tornado is going to happen, and it is nearly impossible to make preparations before one arrives. They are one of the great forces of nature.

Over the years, tornadoes have caused death and damage in the Midwest of the USA, from the Gulf of Mexico north to Canada. They usually arrive between the months of March and July.



In just eight hours on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1974, about a hundred tornadoes killed 324 people in the American Midwest. Thousands of people were injured, and 400 million dollars of damage was caused to farms, homes, and buildings.

The worst-hit town was Xenia in the state of Ohio. In five minutes, the tornado left thirty people dead, 585 people injured, and thousands homeless. Half the town was destroyed. A lorry was blown into the sky, thrown into a tree, which then fell upside down, on top of the lorry! Packets of banknotes from a damaged bank building were found 300 kilometres away. All through the storm, an old woman sat in her chair after her house had blown away. She refused to move or to speak for many hours, because she simply could not accept that her house was no longer there.

Although a tornado is an uncontrolled force of nature, its power is surprisingly exact. The great power is all held in the 'eye' or the centre of the tornado.



A man aged sixty-three in the state of Georgia pushed his wife and sons into the kitchen when the storm arrived. They were unhurt by the tornado. But the married daughter who lived next door was not so lucky. The daughter's house completely collapsed. The daughter and her son were dead, and the rest of her family lay dying or injured. The eye of the storm had passed directly over the daughter's house.

Similarly, one Xenia family found that their house had collapsed, except for one wall. Plates and dishes had been thrown into the washing machine, and pieces of wood had been pushed into the wall. But a box of soap powder stood untouched. The soap powder was just a few centimeters beyond the force of the tornado.

As happens with many disasters, people who are not involved seem to enjoy looking at the damage. In the state of Indiana, the National Guard had to use one thousand men to prevent sightseers from getting in the way of the emergency services. Every lorry in the state was needed to help to take food and water and medicines to the victims, but the sightseers got in the way.

The end...

