



Checklist: Underground Tornado Shelter

Questions to ask before you buy



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Underground Tornado Shelter Checklist

Questions to ask before you buy

Thinking of purchasing an underground tornado shelter? Before you buy, research your options and have no doubts about your investment. Use this checklist of questions as a starting point in your discussion with vendors to investigate the products you are considering.

What is most important to you?

- A shelter that provides protection from most storms/tornadoes and also provides protection against intruders.

We recommend that you consider an above ground safe room/storm shelter. [See the "Above Ground Safe Room/ Storm Shelter Checklist."](#)

- A shelter that provides protection from the most extreme storms/tornadoes.

An underground tornado shelter is your best option. Use this checklist to help you choose a shelter that is right for you.

Questions on Use, Location and Accessibility

1. Where do you want the tornado shelter located? Choose a convenient area that can be accessed quickly during an emergency.

- The basement of your home
- Garage attached to your home
- Unattached garage
- Carport attached to your home
- Unattached carport
- Outside your home, such as in the backyard
- Other:

2. Are there any accessibility challenges to consider? (Check all that apply.)

- Must be accessible to small children
- Must be accessible to handicapped individuals
- Must be accessible to the elderly with limited mobility
- Must be accessible to animals
- Other:

Questions on Manufacturing, Features and Capacity

3. What material is used to build the tornado shelter?

- Galvanized steel
- Black tar epoxy coated steel
- Fiberglass
- Polyethylene
- Concrete and rebar

4. How many people should the shelter hold based on the size of your family?

- Up to three people
- Up to six people
- Up to eight people
- More than eight people

5. What features are included in the shelter? (Check all that apply.)

- Benches
- Steps
 - Are the steps removable once you're inside the shelter?
- Ladder
 - Is the ladder removable once you're inside the shelter?
- Lights
- Vents
 - Do the vents provide enough breathing air capacity at maximum occupancy?
 - Are the vents protected from intrusion of windborne debris?
- Come-along winch
- Chains
- Other:

NSS SHELTER TYPES

Above Ground Storm Shelters / Safe Rooms

Pros:

- Can be used as a panic room and a safe to protect valuables
- Door opens inward to prevent debris blocking exit
- Handicap-accessible
- Can be moved and reinstalled
- Most accessible when installed inside your home

Underground Tornado Shelters

Pros:

- Safest shelter with no risk of side-impact
- Protection from an F5 tornado
- Does not take up space in the garage
- Discreet and hidden
- 25-Year Transferrable Corrosion Warranty
- Lid can be forced open from the inside
- Most accessible when installed inside your home

For design, fabrication and installation specs, [download our product guide.](#)

Questions on Cost, Financing and Warranty

6. What is the price of the shelter? Do any additional charges apply? (Check all that apply.)

- Price of storm shelter unit
 - Taxes
 - Installation fee
 - Delivery fee
 - Distance fee
 - Fuel fee
 - Rock excavation
 - Rock insurance policy
 - Motorized wheel barrow to protect driveway
 - Customization fee
 - Other:
- Are the storm shelter installers able to excavate rock during the installation? *(It's important to confirm that your shelter installers will not abandon the project if they hit rock during the installation. Rock removal can be a costly additional expense if the price is not discussed up front or done professionally. Refer to question 7 when talking about rock removal with your vendor.)*

7. What type of financing plan is available? (Check all that apply.)

- No financing plan
- No money down
- Interest free
- Monthly payment plan
- Other:

8. What type of rock removal policy does the vendor offer? (Check all that apply.)

- Full rock removal insurance policy (NSS offers a [Rock Solid Assurance Policy](#) to cover the expense of rock removal. Learn more about it here.)
- Per day excavation fee
- Per hour excavation fee
- Cap on excavation fees / fixed price
- Equipment rental cost
- Other:

9. What is the warranty / guarantee coverage? (Check all that apply.)

- 25-year rust and corrosion warranty
 - “Lifetime” warranty (What does lifetime mean? For example, does it mean as long as you own your home? Does it mean life of the shelter materials? Is it only valid while the company is in business? Ask for details about any warranties.)
 - Transferable warranty (warranty is transferable to a new homeowner)
 - Workmanship warranty
 - Warranty managed by manufacturer
 - Warranty managed by second or third party
 - Other:
- I feel confident that the company managing the warranty will be in business whenever I need them to uphold warranty.

Questions on Industry and Vendor Standards

10. Does the product meet industry standards for tornado shelters? (Check all that apply.)

- Tested by Texas Tech Wind Institute
- Design meets FEMA and NSSA standards
 - Will the shelter resist deterioration from moisture or corrosive soils?
- Features meet FEMA and NSSA standards
- Installation process meets FEMA and NSSA standards
- Buoyancy and water table tested
 - Is the shelter ballasted or anchored with heavy material such as gravel to improve its stability and prevent it from uplifting or floating?

11. What type of vendor is selling the shelter?

- Tornado shelter manufacturer
- Authorized tornado shelter dealer

12. How credible is the shelter vendor? (Check all that apply.)

- Has great online reviews and testimonies
- Has a good reputation with the Better Business Bureau
- Displays knowledge about storm shelter products and storm preparedness
- Has been willing to share product information and materials
- I'm confident the business will be open 10 years from now
- Other:

Questions on the Installation Process

13. What is the average time required to install the shelter?

- 0 to 4 hours / half day
- 5 to 8 hours / full day
- Two days or more
- Other:

14. How experienced are the shelter installers?

- They are professionally trained employees of the storm shelter company
- They are local subcontractors with experience installing underground tornado shelters
- They are out-of-town or state subcontractors with experience installing underground tornado shelters
- They are subcontractors without experience installing underground tornado shelters
- Other:

15. What materials will be used to back fill the shelter during installation?

(Check all that apply.)

- Concrete
- Concrete and dirt
- Concrete and sand
- Dirt
- Sand
- Other:

- I have taken a tour of the underground tornado shelter.

We strongly recommend taking a tour of the tornado shelter. It's best to see, touch and experience the shelter before you purchase.

- I have thoroughly read the contract or agreement with the tornado shelter vendor.



**Ready to
purchase?**

Call us at 615.223.7233

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**Visit our store at
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