Tornados

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Tornados are one of nature's most powerful forces.

Although hurricanes may be larger in size, the winds inside a tornado are far more concentrated.

Powerful tornados have produced wind speeds of over 500kmph – about double those of Hurricane Katrina, which was the most powerful hurricane in U.S. history.

How do tornados form?

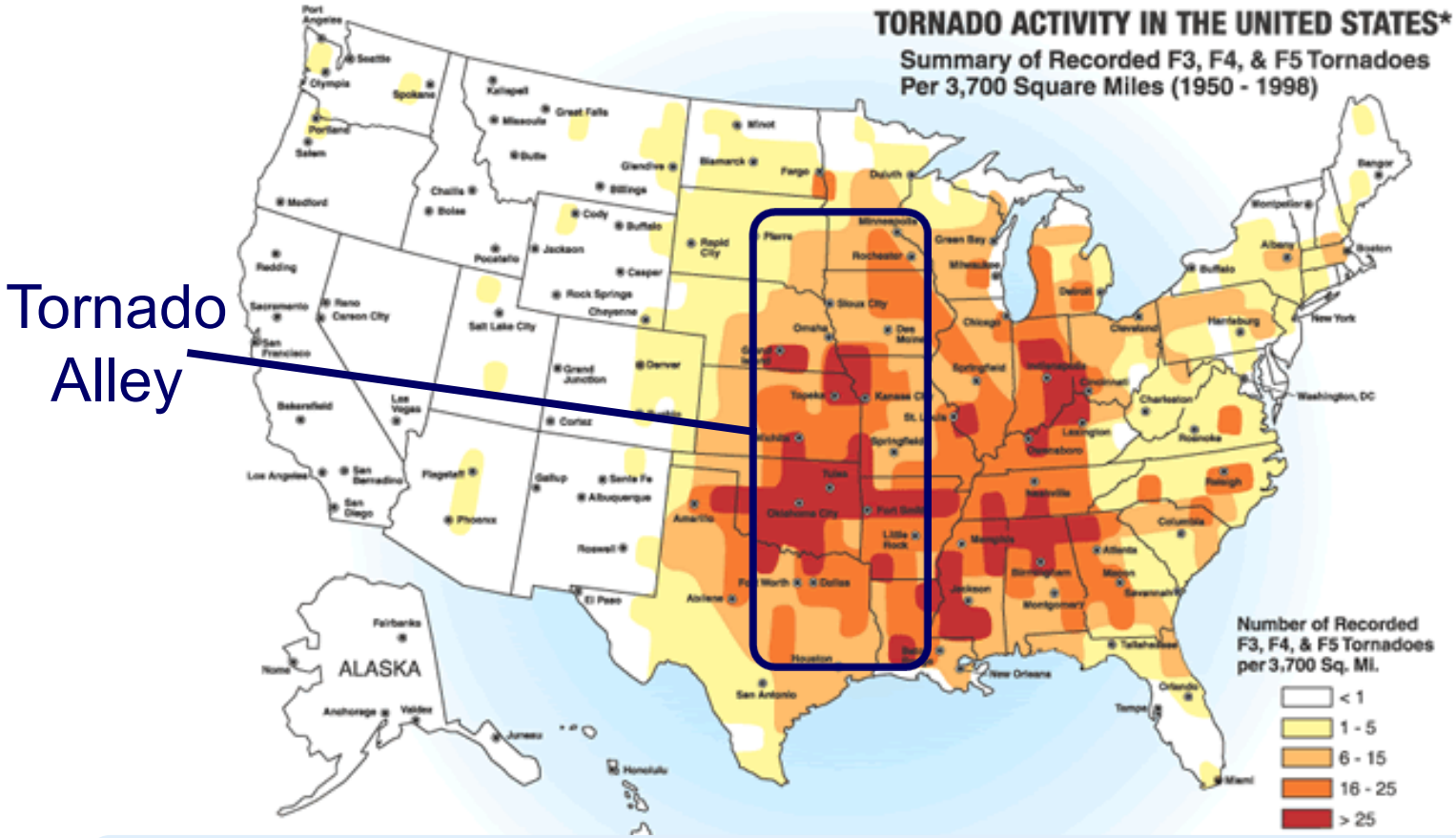
Tornados form where there is warm air rising upwards from the ground.

If this rising, warm air then collides with the descending cool air of an oncoming thunderstorm, it can produce a **spinning vortex**.

If this spinning vortex, known as a **funnel cloud**, has enough energy, it grows larger until it eventually hits the ground, forming a tornado.

Tornado Alley

Tornados occur all over the world, but a large percentage of them form in an area of the U.S. known as **Tornado Alley**.



Can you identify Tornado Alley on this map?

Why here?

Tornado Alley is where cool, dry air moving southwards from Canada collides with warm, humid tropical air moving northwards from the Gulf of Mexico.

When the **cold front** and the **warm front** meet, the combination of warm rising air and cold falling air is exactly right for tornado formation.

The **tornado season** in the U.S. generally lasts from March until August.

Fujita scale

Test your knowledge