

## **Dissertation Abstract**

This dissertation investigates the attitudes and beliefs held by mobile home residents about taking shelter from tornadoes. Mobile home residents are disproportionately affected by tornadoes. They make up about 6% of the population of the United States, but account for about 45% of tornado deaths. Previous studies investigated what people knew about tornadoes or how they perceived danger from tornadoes. This project takes a different approach by focusing on what people know about sheltering strategies and how they perceive the effectiveness of those actions in preventing harm. The first goal of this project is to identify common attitudes and beliefs about tornado sheltering within mobile home communities. This will be accomplished by a series of interviews with mobile home residents in South Carolina, where mobile homes are as prominent in the housing sector as any other state in the United States. After the interviews, a questionnaire will be mailed to random occupied mobile home units in South Carolina; this will provide data for the remaining goals of the project.

A second goal is to discover if certain types of attitudes and beliefs are more prevalent in different sectors of the population. The study will investigate gender, age, race and ethnicity, family structure, education, mobility, and several other factors to determine how these relate to attitudes and beliefs about taking shelter from tornadoes. This project will also research whether mobile home residents living in different geographic situations have different tornado sheltering strategies. The final goal is to understand what mobile home residents intend to do when tornadoes threaten, and to understand which factors discussed above are most important in their decision-making. This will enable development of a conceptual framework for how mobile home residents develop tornado sheltering plans and take action, or why they fail to do so.