

NMT B2 Task 2 practice (5)

Read the text. For questions (1-6), choose the correct answer (A, B, C, or D)

Tornadoes

A tornado is a powerful storm which travels across land and creates a column of air which reaches up to the clouds. Although the extremely high wind speeds are deadly, the real danger with tornadoes comes from the fact that scientists cannot yet accurately predict when or where they will happen. This means that, in many cases, it is not possible to warn people quickly enough for them to leave the area or take safety measures such as finding proper shelter.

Tornadoes are difficult to predict because they form so quickly and unexpectedly. The weather conditions that lead to a tornado are not always the same. Sometimes, weather that would be expected to create a tornado does not actually produce one. One factor that seems to lead to a tornado is when winds which blow at different speeds meet and cause the air between them to move in circles.

Once a tornado touches the ground, it begins to pull in anything in its path: rocks, branches of trees, cars, parts of buildings, and even whole houses. Tornadoes usually travel at speeds between 25 and 40 mph, although strong ones reach speeds of 200 or even 300 mph.

Some areas are more likely to be hit by tornadoes than others; the United States, for example, sees over 1,000 tornadoes every single year. The worst tornado in US history occurred in 1925, and is now known as the 'Tri-State Tornado', as it covered a record-breaking distance of 219 miles across three separate states: Illinois, Indiana and Missouri. This tornado stayed on the ground for three and half hours, killing 695 people, and causing millions of dollars' worth of damage.

In those days, tornado prediction didn't really exist. There had been some studies many years earlier, which suggested possible weather conditions which could lead to a tornado, but very little had been done since. Weather programmes would not forecast tornadoes, because an inaccurate warning might cause public panic. The Tri-State Tornado opened many people's eyes to the danger of ignoring tornadoes and also confirmed some of the weather conditions that were likely to result in a tornado.

Since then, a great deal of work has focused on understanding and predicting tornadoes. Today, experts use satellites, radar and computers to follow storms around the world, allowing them to warn people fairly quickly if any tornadoes develop. If a tornado like the Tri-State Tornado happened today, at least four weather stations would be watching it develop and would send out warnings, first for heavy storms, then for the tornado. With today's technology, many more lives would be saved.

As technology advances, the accuracy and speed with which tornadoes can be predicted may improve, but it is probable that there will always be room for mistakes. Even once a tornado is created, it is not always possible to see in advance which areas will be affected by it. It may be that the only way to ever really predict a tornado will be through observation, which means that the focus will be on sending out warning messages as early and as quickly as possible. Currently, the average tornado warning time is around thirteen minutes; with new technology able to observe each storm more closely, experts will hopefully be able to increase this time.

- 1 According to the text, tornadoes are considered so dangerous because**
 - A. the winds travel at different speeds.
 - B. there is little chance of predicting them.
 - C. there are no possible safety measures.
 - D. they cover such large areas.

- 2 There is a greater risk of tornadoes when**
 - A. winds blow at great heights.
 - B. the wind blows at speeds between 40-100 mph.
 - C. air moves towards the ground.
 - D. winds travelling at different speeds meet.

- 3 The Tri-State Tornado**
 - A. travelled at 219 miles per hour.
 - B. was the 1,000th tornado that year.
 - C. affected an unusually large area.
 - D. was the third tornado in the same state.

- 4 In 1925, weather forecast programmes**
 - A. didn't think tornadoes were dangerous.
 - B. did not actually exist.
 - C. didn't believe the Tri-State Tornado predictions.
 - D. were unable to give accurate predictions.

- 5 Tornado prediction today**
 - A. uses four weather stations to watch storms.
 - B. can tell which storms will become tornadoes.
 - C. is still not completely reliable.
 - D. only observes storms in high-risk areas.

- 6 According to the text, the aim for future tornado prediction is to**
 - A. come up with more theories about tornado creation.
 - B. prevent tornadoes from happening.
 - C. give even earlier warnings of tornadoes.
 - D. be able to predict the routes of tornadoes.