

EXPERIENCE AS A FACTOR IN TORNADO AWARENESS
AND RESPONSE LEVELS IN KANSAS

by

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The environment reflects the interaction between human activity and the various natural systems. In part, these patterns of human activity reflected by the environment, are determined by the adjustments people make, either individually or collectively to a variety of phenomena which exist in nature, including those which pose a threat of danger to human life and property. Events such as floods, blizzards, earthquakes, and tornadoes are considered to be hazards when they occur in conjunction with human activities. Such hazards require human adjustments or change with respect to hazard response. To the inhabitants of the midwestern United States, the meteorological hazards of floods, drought, tornadoes, hail and windstorms present the greatest natural threat to both life and property. In the state of Kansas, the tornado has been the most frequent and consistent form of naturally occurring disaster throughout its history. This is the land where the skies are not cloudy all day and where a simple tapping of ruby slippers and a wish to return home reverses a young Kansas girl's dreams of yellow brick roads, Munchkins and the land of Oz back to the reality of the dangers involved with this awesome phenomenon. An interesting question arises from this historical association with actual and fictional tornadoes by the residents of Kansas. Because of past tornado experiences, are the citizens of Kansas communities more concerned and aware of this disaster and therefore respond differently? This study looks at three Kansas communities with varying degrees of tornado experience in an effort to investigate the influence of experience on human awareness and response behavior to the