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Conference on European Tornadoes and Severe Storms

Tornadoes in France

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The analysis of 300 French tornadoes shows that each year, 3 events affect, on average, France. This number, relatively low, is undoubtedly underestimated, because the database is always in construction. The most touched areas are the north-western part of the country (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardie, Normandie, Ile-de-France, Champagne, Val-de-Loire), the South (Languedoc) and the East (Bourgogne and Franche-Comté).

Tornadoes occur mainly in spring and in summer (August is the month where the frequency is maximum, approximately 19 % of all the cases). However, autumnal and winter tornadoes are not unknown (3 % in February and December). Tornadoes occur mainly in the afternoon (mid and end); night tornadoes represent only 2 % of the cases.

The direction of the tornadoes is generally from South-West to North-East in the major part of the country, except in the South where the direction is sometimes from South to North.

The risk probability for France, calculated over the period 1960-1999, is approximately $0,5 \times 10^{-5}$ per year (for tornadoes of intensity F2 or greater) in the current database, with large regional variations. 36 killing tornadoes were listed (12 % of the cases), most of them of intensity F3 or greater.

