

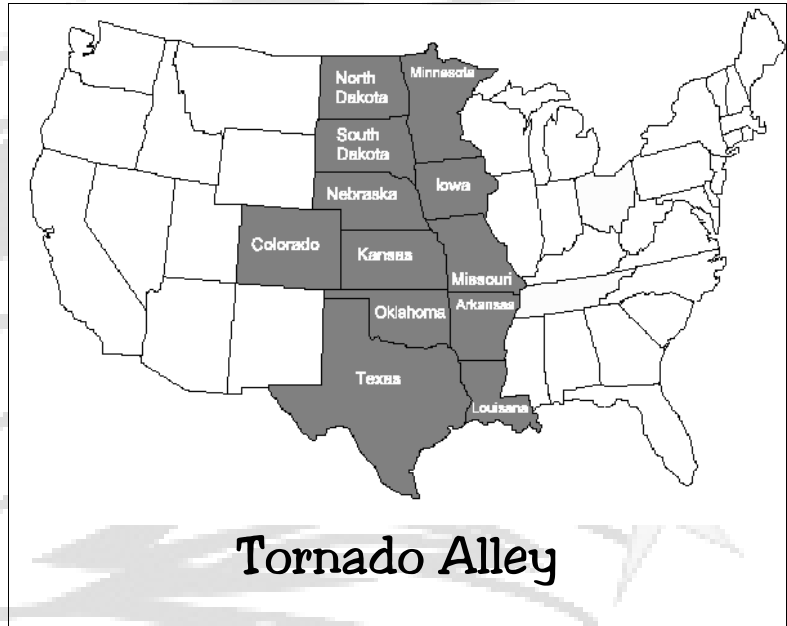
# Tornado Alley

*Night of the Twisters*

by Ivy Ruckman

## Where is Tornado Alley?

(1) The area over which tornadoes occur most often in North America is called **Tornado Alley**. It covers the middle part of the **continent** also known as the Great Plains. Tornado Alley stretches between the Rocky Mountains in the west to nearly the Appalachians Mountains in the east. It also extends from the gulf coast of the United States in the south to prairie provinces of Canada to the north. This means it includes all or part of thirteen mid-west US states and the southern parts of three Canadian provinces.



(2) On **average**, 1,214 tornadoes occur in the United States each year. Canada receives less than a hundred. Most tornadoes occur in **uninhabited** areas and are rarely seen except by people brave enough to chase them. Only the several dozen that cause destruction and death are reported. Ninety percent of all tornadoes occur in association with thunderstorms.

(3) Of course tornadoes are observed in other areas of the United States and Canada. But, their numbers are few and in some cases, extremely **rare**.

## Why Are Tornadoes More Frequent in Tornado Alley?

(4) Tornadoes are more common in the central plains region of the United States because this is where warm, humid air masses from the Gulf of Mexico **collide** with cooler, drier air masses from Canada. These **collisions** create the huge thunderstorms and supercells that often **spawn** tornadoes. Because the land in Tornado Alley is relatively flat and far from the influences of both Atlantic and Pacific Ocean storms, these thunderstorms can develop **undisturbed** and often create the unique conditions necessary for tornadoes to form.

(5) Although the tornado season stretches from spring to late summer, the **peak time** for tornadoes **varies** from state to state.

## Frequency of Tornadoes in Tornado Alley

(6) Even though tornadoes are more common in Tornado Alley than elsewhere, not all states get the same number of tornadoes yearly. Texas and Oklahoma have tornadoes most frequently than any other state. Tornadoes are rare in Alaska. The map below shows where tornadoes are more frequent across the US. How many tornadoes is Nebraska likely to get yearly?

