The decision to seek shelter in a community storm shelter is certainly made more difficult by the consideration for COVID-19, and each individual will need to make an educated decision on where and when to shelter from a tornado.

At this time, the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) is recommending that your first priority should be to protect yourself from a potential tornado. If a warning is issued for your area, you are more likely to be affected by the tornado than the virus.

However, the decisions to open any community shelters are done at the local or county level. Before you make a decision to go to a community shelter, you should check with your community shelter managers to ensure they are open, and if there are any local COVID-19 considerations. Certainly, wherever you choose to shelter from a tornado, you should use as many precautions as possible to inhibit the spread of COVID-19 as best as you can. If you rely on public community shelters, now may be the time to explore other options that might keep you safer from severe weather and possibly limit your exposure to COVID-19.

The best way to prepare for this potential scenario is to keep up with the latest weather forecast as well as the latest recommendations regarding COVID-19 from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the ADPH, and local authorities.