

Weathering the Fury of Spring Storms

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Severe Weather Awareness Week is **April 17th-21st, 2006**. There will be 2 statewide tornado drills on April 20th. The first will take place statewide at **1:45 p.m.** All jurisdictions will activate their warning systems. This first drill allows schools, businesses, and hospitals to practice their sheltering plans. The second drill is at **6:55 p.m.** The evening drill will allow families and second-shift workers an opportunity to practice their sheltering plans.

Recognizing and Reacting To a Weather Hazard:

Lightning- Lightning results from the buildup and discharge of electricity. It can occur from cloud-to-cloud, within a cloud, cloud-to-ground, or cloud-to-air. The rapid heating and cooling of the air near the lightning channel causes a shock wave that result in thunder. The 30/30 lightning safety rule is to go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder. If lightning is occurring, seek a sturdy shelter. If there is not a permanent structure available, get inside a hard top automobile and keep the windows up. Avoid touching metal. If caught outdoors, find a low spot away from trees, fences and poles. If you feel your skin tingle or your hair stand on end, squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet. Make yourself the smallest target possible and minimize your contact with the ground. **DO NOT** lie down. If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning.

Thunderstorms- 1,800 thunderstorms occur at any moment around the world and all are dangerous. The typical thunderstorm is 15 miles in diameter and lasts an average of 30 minutes. 10 % of these storms are classified as severe. How far away is the thunderstorm? Count the number of seconds between a flash of lightning and the next clap of thunder. Divide this number by 5 to determine the distance to the lightning in miles.

Tornadoes- A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground. They vary in wind speed from 30mph to 250 mph. 88 % of tornadoes are weak (less than 110mph) and less than 1 % are violent (winds greater than 205 mph). Seeking safety in a tornado, move a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture. Stay away from windows. Manufactured homes even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes. Leave the manufactured homes and go to nearby storm shelters. Get out of automobiles and seek shelter. Remain alert for signs of an approaching tornado such as a dark, often greenish sky, large hail, or a loud roar similar to a freight train.

.An Emergency Plan:

- Meet with household members. Discuss with children the dangers of fire, severe weather, tornadoes and other emergencies.
- In a power outages use flashlights, not candles. Know 1st aid and CPR.
- Have a family meeting place and a backup if that becomes an unsafe place in a disaster.
- Learn how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main switches.

- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones; including relatives or friends outside the area. Teach children how to call 911 for emergencies, but not to practice on the phone.
- Instruct household members to turn on the radio for emergency information.
- When picking your shelter location keep in mind it should be a place that avoids doorways, stairways and windows, is pre-stocked, and is large enough to hold the whole family.

Prepare a Disaster Supplies Kit for Home (store in a easy to carry container, like a backpack or duffle bag). Include:

- A 3-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day). Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers. Identify the storage date and replace every six months.
- A supply of non-perishable packaged or canned food and a non-electric can opener.
- A change of clothing, rain gear, an extra pair of glasses, and sturdy shoes.
- Blankets or sleeping bags.
- A first aid kit and prescription medications.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries.
- Credit cards numbers, cash and an extra set of car keys.
- A list of family physicians and important family information.
- Special items for infants, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Keep a smaller disaster supply kit in the trunk of your car.

The time you invest now is what determines how well you and your family weather the dynamic spring ahead.