



Be prepared as storm season approaches

Severe Weather Awareness week is a chance to get ready and learn more about preparing for emergencies

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(MINNEAPOLIS) April 16-20 is National Severe Weather Awareness week, and it's a chance for people to make sure they're prepared if an emergency happens. There are many things people can do at home to be ready, including taking part in two tornado drills that will be conducted on Thursday, April 19. The first drill is statewide at 1:45 p.m. to allow homeowners, schools, retail businesses, hospitals and other organizations to practice their emergency plans. The City of Minneapolis will be activating its tornado sirens at 1:45 p.m. and again at 6:55 p.m.

As the anniversary of the May 22, 2011 tornado approaches, now is a good time refresh your memory on what tornado watches and warnings mean, and how to be prepared. A tornado watch highlights an area where tornadoes are likely to develop. When a tornado watch is declared, continue your normal activities, but keep track of the latest weather reports, and be ready to get to a shelter. Remember - tornadoes can develop quickly.

If there's a tornado warning, move to the lowest level of the building you're in, to the innermost room, or go to a pre-designated shelter area. Stay away from windows. In a hallway, crouch down and protect your head from flying debris. Avoid areas with glass and large expanses of roof with no supports.

Resources in many languages help people get ready for severe weather

Severe Weather Awareness Week is designed to help teach Minnesotans about weather hazards and provide resources to minimize the risks associated with severe weather. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety's website has preparedness information for all types of severe weather including storms, flash floods and heat waves and can be used as a guide to help folks make a plan, build an emergency kit, and practice drills.

ECHO Minnesota, an organization that provides preparedness information in many languages, has a set of videos that people can view to learn more about being ready for emergencies. Just visit the ECHO Minnesota website to see videos on topics like tornado safety, emergency sirens, severe weather warnings, and flooding. Each video can be viewed in English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Vietnamese, Lao, and Khmer, and the flooding video is also available in Karen.

ECHO Minnesota created a new video called "Recovering from the Storm" following the north Minneapolis tornado in the spring of 2011, and it shows viewers how to be prepared, work together, and take care of themselves, their families, and their community when a storm hits. Even a year later, a traumatic event like the north Minneapolis tornado can be difficult to recover from, and many people continue to experience stress, worry, and fear as they deal with their loss and put their lives back together. "Recovering from the Storm" is available for viewing in English, Spanish, Somali, and Hmong.

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