



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

Administrative Services Emergency Management

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PRESS RELEASE

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WISCONSIN TORNADO AND SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK APRIL 21 – 25, 2008

Governor Jim Doyle has proclaimed April 21 – 25, 2008, as Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin. During this time a statewide tornado drill is scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 2008. On April 24, at approximately 1:00 PM, a mock tornado watch will be issued for the entire State of Wisconsin. At approximately 1:20 PM, a mock tornado warning will be issued for all of Southeast Wisconsin, which will include the sounding of Kenosha County's Outdoor Warning sirens. If severe weather should be present in the State on Thursday, April 24, the mock tornado drill will be postponed until Friday, April 25, at the same time. The drill will conclude at 2 PM. Also as part of Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week, Kenosha County will be sponsoring an Advance Tornado Spotter's Class which is FREE, on Tuesday April 22nd, from 6:30 – 8:30 PM, at the Kenosha County Center (Highways 45 & 50). Though the class is FREE, people need to have taken a Basic Tornado Spotter's Class anytime in the past.

"The reasoning behind the tornado drill is to offer an opportunity for schools, businesses and families to discuss and practice for severe weather activities," stated Ben Schliesman, Director of Kenosha County Emergency Management/Homeland Security. "It's important that everyone regardless of where they are at when severe weather strikes, knows what to do and where to go. It's not a matter of if a tornado will touch down in Kenosha County; it's a matter of when the next Tornado will touch down in Kenosha County. Though most tornadoes in Wisconsin occur between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. during the months of April through October, tornadoes can strike anytime, day or night and can occur anytime of the year. In 2005, a record 62 documented tornadoes touched-down in WI."

"The purpose of Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week, is to get people thinking about not only tornadoes and what one needs to do to protect themselves, their families and their property, but other types of severe weather as well," said Schliesman. "People need to be aware of the dangers of severe thunderstorms/lightning which cause an average of 93 deaths and 300 injuries per year nationwide; flash floods/floods which kill nearly 140 people per year nationwide and causes millions of dollars in damages."

The National Weather Service has reported the following severe weather statistics for Kenosha County:

- 202 Severe Thunderstorm Watches, 147 Severe Thunderstorm Warnings (1982 - 2007),
- 77 Tornado Watches, 10 Tornado Warnings and 5 Tornadoes (1982 – Jan. 7, 2008),
- 30 Flood events, 6 Presidential Disaster Declarations for Flooding (1982 – 2007),
- 32 Hail storms resulting in injuries & millions of dollars in property damage (1982 – 2007),
- 15 Lightning events causing 3 deaths, injuries and property damage/fires (1982 – 2007),
- 90 Severe Thunderstorm Wind events 50 mph – 99 mph, (Hurricane-Force Winds are 74 mph or greater) and 2 events having winds of 100 mph or greater (1982 – 2007),

“With regard to warning devices, all residents, schools and businesses are highly encouraged to purchase a NOAA All Hazard Weather Radio with a frequency of 162.450, the frequency assigned to Kenosha/Racine counties. For as little as \$25, no matter where you live/work in Kenosha County, you can always get up to the minute weather information, specific to the Kenosha/Racine area and you will also be notified of any chemical spills/releases, health events and other non-weather emergencies with specific instructions as to what you need to do,” said Schliesman. “Additionally, Kenosha County operates and maintains the outdoor warning sirens located throughout the County. The sirens are sounded when the National Weather Service issues a “Tornado Warning” or a “Severe Thunderstorm Warning with Hurricane Force Winds.” The sirens are an outdoor warning device meant to be heard outdoors or while in a vehicle; sirens are not meant to be heard indoors! We do ask all citizens to help us maintain the sirens, by “Adopting a Siren” and notifying Kenosha County Emergency Management at 262-605-7900, when a siren doesn’t sound. Kenosha County tests its outdoor warning sirens the third Saturday of each month at 10:30 a.m.”

“To be prepared for severe weather, residents, schools and every business/facility should have an emergency plan,” stated Schliesman. “Schools, businesses/facilities need to know the “safest areas” within their buildings that they should evacuate to. Residents should evacuate to the basement or to the lowest level of their homes/apartment buildings if they don’t have a basement, to an interior room with no windows if at all possible. It’s important that you cover/protect your head from injuries; it’s not the tornado or winds that may injure you, it’s the flying debris. Everything that is not physically attached to a building and even some things that are, become potential missiles that can strike and injure you.”

When a tornado or severe weather strikes, it may cause wide spread power outages that could last for several days or weeks. It’s therefore important to have a “Family Disaster Supply Kit” which should include the following: a three day supply of water (one gallon per day per person), a change of clothing, one blanket/sleeping bag for each family member, a first aid kit including prescription medicines or a list of each prescription including Doctor’s name, drug name and pharmacy, flashlight, weather radio, portable radio, extra batteries, extra set of car keys, credit cards/cash, special items for infants, elderly or disabled, ID cards, driver’s license and copies of important papers. “If you find yourself without power or your home is destroyed, you will still have the basic essentials to continue functioning,” said Schliesman.

For more information on safety precautions during severe weather or to request a “Tornado Safest Area” walkthrough, please contact Kenosha County Emergency Management at 262-605-7900.