



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Brian M. Satula
Administrator

Scott Walker
Governor

February 2014

Re: Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week – April 21-25, 2014

Dear School Officials:

Governor Scott Walker has proclaimed the week of April 21-25, 2014 as Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin. During Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week, we are asking that school administrators, safety officers, and faculty take time to go over the procedures needed when severe weather strikes to ensure that staff and students are prepared.

Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes annually. Last year, 16 tornadoes were reported in Wisconsin by the National Weather Service (NWS), including six during the night of August 6-7. The strongest tornado, rated EF2, hit near New London in Waupaca and Outagamie counties on August 7. Two injuries occurred last year as a result of the tornadoes.

On Thursday, April 24, 2014, a statewide tornado drill is planned. The drill will be an ideal opportunity for school staff and students to practice their safety procedures for severe weather. The mock tornado watch will be issued statewide by the NWS at 1:00 pm. The NWS will then issue a statewide mock tornado warning at 1:45 pm.

You do not have to participate during the April 24 drill; however, you are welcome to hold your own drill at any time. The statewide drill will be postponed until Friday, April 25, 2014 if there is a threat of severe weather in Wisconsin on Thursday. The drill will go on in all other conditions including non-severe weather (clouds, rain, dark sky, scattered thunderstorms, etc.). If severe weather occurs on Friday, the drill will be cancelled.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Emergency Management and the National Weather Service encourage your participation in promoting Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week. For more information on tornadoes and severe weather, contact your county or tribal emergency management director or your local NWS office.

Thank you for your support.

Brian M. Satula
WEM Administrator

Tornado Safety in Schools

Every School Should Have a Severe Weather Safety Plan

- Develop an action plan with frequent drills. Review the plan annually and anytime changes are made to the building, shelters, or classroom sizes. A good time to practice is during the annual statewide tornado drill held in April.
- Each school should be inspected and shelter areas designated by a registered engineer or architect. Basements offer the best protection. Schools without basements should use interior rooms on the lowest floor and away from windows. Hallways that have doors to the outside can act as wind tunnels, so avoid these areas. Put as many walls as possible between the students and the storm. Gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums offer no protection from tornado-strength winds.
- Weather safety plans should take into account the amount of time it takes for students to get to shelter areas.
- Make special provisions for disabled students and those in portable classrooms.
- Ensure students know the protection position. It doesn't matter if the students face a wall or put their backs to a wall, as long as they cover their head.
- Each school should have a NOAA Weather Radio with battery back-up and other methods to receive emergency weather information. Make sure the weather radio and other source of weather news is always available, **even during after-school activities**.
- If the school's alarm system relies on electricity, have an alternate method to notify teachers and students in case of power failure, such as an air horn or megaphone. Make sure everyone knows what the notification signal is.
- Delay lunches or assemblies in large rooms if severe weather is anticipated.
- During threatening weather, keep children at school beyond regular hours until the storms pass. Children are safer at school than in a bus or car.
- Hospitals, nursing homes, and other institutions should develop similar plans.



You can prepare for the dangers from severe weather by learning the safest places to seek shelter in the school. Learn basic weather terms and danger signs. The chances of staying safe during severe weather are greater if you have a plan for your school and practice the plan frequently.

Stay Informed with All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio

The “Smoke Alarm” for Severe Weather

- NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a public warning system that broadcasts forecasts, warnings, and emergency information 24 hours a day.
- Radio receivers can quietly monitor these broadcasts and will alert when important (life threatening) messages are issued for your area.
- “All Hazards” messages include:
 - ▶ Natural disasters (e.g., tornado, floods, blizzards)
 - ▶ Accidents (e.g., chemical release, train derailments, nuclear power emergencies)
 - ▶ Terrorist attacks
- **Please ensure they are used.** During an emergency, seconds count! These radios are a valuable alerting device, easy to use, and can also be used to check on every-day weather, including wind chill information during the winter.
- Place your radio in areas that are constantly monitored (e.g., school office, principal’s office). Remember those occasions when the school is used for activities outside normal hours and make sure the radio can be monitored during those times.
- The radios are tested weekly. Make sure yours works!
- If you have any questions about weather radios, contact your local National Weather Service office.



Related Web Sites

NOAA Weather Radio Home Page.....	www.weather.gov/nwr
NWS All Hazards Web Page.....	www.weather.gov/nwr/allhazard.htm
NWR Coverage in Wisconsin.....	www.weather.gov/nwr/Maps/PHP/wisconsin.php

Wireless Emergency Alerts

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are weather and non-weather messages sent directly to cell phones in areas affected by an emergency. These short messages may look like text messages, but unlike texts which are sent directly to your phone number, they are broadcast to all phones within range of cell towers in the alerted area. The alerts will tell you the type of warning, the affected area and the duration of the event. Weather alerts sent as WEAs in Wisconsin include Tornado Warnings and Flash Flood Warnings.

For more information on WEAs and a list of participating carriers, visit FEMA's Commercial Mobile Alert System web site: <http://fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/emas.shtm>

Severe Weather Watches and Warnings

What to Listen For...

When conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, a WATCH is issued. As storms develop, National Weather Service personnel use information from weather radar, storm spotters, and other sources to issue Severe Thunderstorm and Tornado WARNINGS for areas where severe weather is imminent or already occurring.

Watches and warnings are relayed to local radio and television stations and are broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards.

Local public safety officials also get the warnings, and can activate local warning systems to alert communities.

Tornado Watch: Severe thunderstorms with tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. Be prepared to move to safety if a **Warning** is issued. Know what counties are in the watch area by listening to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards or local radio or television stations.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Thunderstorms with large hail and damaging winds are possible. Be prepared to move to safety if a **Warning** is issued.

Tornado Warning: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Move to a place of safety now!

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: A thunderstorm with large hail and damaging winds has been reported or indicated by weather radar.

Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property to those in the path of the storm!

For More Information...

Check out these web sites for more safety tips, the latest weather forecast, and other weather awareness information.

NOAA National Weather Service

<http://weather.gov>

Click on your part of the state for local weather information

Find the NWS on Facebook

<http://facebook.com>

Search for your NWS Office name



Follow the NWS on Twitter



Duluth: @NWSDuluth

Green Bay: @NWSGreenBay

La Crosse: @NWSLaCrosse

Milwaukee/Sullivan: @NWSMKX

Minneapolis/Chanhassen: @NWS TwinCities

Tornado Preparedness Plan for Schools

<http://www.weather.gov/ax/?n=schoolprep>

Wisconsin Emergency Management

<http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov>

ReadyWisconsin

Web - <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin>

Twitter - @ReadyWisconsin

FEMA for Kids

<http://www.fema.gov/kids>

Ready Classroom: K-8 Preparedness Resources

<http://readyclassroom.discoveryeducation.com>

