

Governor Ted Strickland



American Red Cross
Emergency Management Association of Ohio
National Weather Service
Ohio Citizen Corps / FirstLink
Ohio Department of Aging
Ohio Department of Commerce-State Fire Marshal
Ohio Department of Education

Ohio Department of Health
Ohio Department of Insurance
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Ohio Department of Public Safety -Ohio EMA
Ohio Department of Transportation
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Ohio News Network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ohio's Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 21-27
Statewide Tornado Drill is Wednesday, March 24

Columbus, OH – Next Wednesday morning, warning sirens will sound across the state. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) will activate a test message. Will you know what's going on? Will you know what to do?

At 9:50 a.m. on March 24 the state of Ohio will participate in a statewide tornado drill. During this time, local emergency management agencies will sound and test their outdoor warning sirens. Schools, businesses and homes are encouraged to practice their emergency plans and tornado drills.

As part of a coordinated effort with the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness, Governor Ted Strickland has proclaimed the week of March 21-27 as Severe Weather Awareness Week for the state of Ohio.

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms, developing from major thunderstorms. According to the National Weather Service, they usually are preceded by very heavy rain and hail storms. A thunderstorm accompanied by hail means that the storm has large amounts of energy and may be severe. In general, the larger the hailstones, the more potential there is for damaging winds or tornadoes. Although tornadoes can occur at any time, during any month, Ohio's peak "tornado season" is April through July.

"Severe weather awareness week is the perfect time to update and review your emergency plans, restock your disaster supply kits and practice your safety drills," said Nancy Dragani, executive director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. "The best defense when faced with tornadoes or any severe weather event is preparedness. Planning ahead and knowing what to do in the event of severe weather will lower the chances of injury or death or loss of property."

Know the difference between a tornado watch and warning

A **tornado watch** is issued by the NWS when conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes in and close to the area. Watches are usually issued for four to eight hours. During a tornado watch, review tornado safety plans and be prepared to move to a safe place if conditions worsen. Listen to a NOAA Weather Radio or local TV or radio newscasts for weather updates.

A **tornado warning** is issued by the NWS when a tornado has been detected by Doppler radar or sighted by storm spotters. Most Ohio communities have outdoor warning sirens that sound during storm warnings. If a tornado warning is issued for your area, seek safe shelter immediately. Tornado warnings are usually issued for 30 minutes. Continue to listen to your NOAA Weather Radio or local TV or radio newscasts for up-to-date weather information.

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"Teaching Ohioans Severe Weather Safety and Preparedness"

www.weathersafety.ohio.gov

Tornado Safety Tips

Whether practicing a tornado drill or sheltering during a tornado warning, the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness encourages everyone to **DUCK**.

D – Go **DOWN** to the lowest level

U – Get **UNDER** something

C – **COVER** your head

K – **KEEP** in shelter until the storm has passed

- Be prepared for severe weather before a storm watch or warning is issued. Meet with household members to develop a disaster plan to respond to all hazards, including tornado watches and warnings. Conduct regular tornado drills. Know how to turn off the water, gas and electric at the main switches.
- If you are a person with special needs, register your name and address with your local emergency management agency, police and/or fire departments before any natural or man-made disaster occurs.
- The NOAA Weather Radio has alerting tools available for people who are hearing impaired. Some weather radio receivers can be connected to an existing home security system, similar as a doorbell, smoke detector or other sensor. For additional information, visit the NWS NOAA Weather Radio link: http://www.weather.gov/nwr/special_need.htm
- The safest place to be during a tornado is a basement. If the building has no basement or cellar, go to a small, centrally located room on the lowest level of the building, such as a bathroom or closet or interior hallway.
- If you are in a vehicle, trailer or mobile home, get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building or storm shelter. Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little or no protection from tornadoes.
- If you are outside with no shelter, lie in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Do not seek shelter under a highway overpass or bridge. You will be exposed to stronger winds and flying debris.

The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness is comprised of 14 state agencies and organizations that are dedicated in educating Ohioans about the natural disasters that typically affect the state, and how to plan and prepared for severe weather incidents and home emergencies before they happen. For additional information on tornado safety and severe weather preparedness, visit the OCSWA website at www.weathersafety.ohio.gov.

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