



**Governor John R. Kasich**

American Red Cross	Ohio Department of Insurance
Emergency Management Association of Ohio	Ohio Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services
National Weather Service	Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Ohio Citizen Corps	Ohio Department of Public Safety - Ohio EMA
Ohio Department of Aging	Ohio Department of Transportation
Ohio Department of Commerce-State Fire Marshal	Ohio Insurance Institute
Ohio Department of Education	WBNS – 10TV
Ohio Department of Health	WCMH – NBC4

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Ohio’s Severe Weather Awareness Week is Perfect Time to Prepare**  
*Spring Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 20-26*

COLUMBUS, OH – Thanks to El Niño, Ohio’s winter weather was full of ups and downs: low snowfall amounts; warmer-than-usual temperatures; and a few blasts of arctic air in between. One thing that is consistent about Ohio’s weather is its inconsistencies.

This month already, we’ve had highs in the 60s with heavy rain one day, and highs in the 30s with snow the next. No matter the climate prediction, it is always important to be prepared to handle any weather situation. And Severe Weather Awareness Week is the perfect time to brush up on severe weather preparedness.

“Ohio has been pretty fortunate lately, when it comes to severe weather and major natural disasters,” said Sima Merick, executive director of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. “But we cannot become complacent and not be prepared. During this weather campaign, make the effort to review disaster plans, practice tornado and fire drills, and assemble emergency supply kits.”

In a coordinated effort with the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA), Governor John R. Kasich, proclaims March 20-26 as Ohio’s Severe Weather Awareness Week.

As part of Severe Weather Awareness Week, as coordinated by OCSWA, the state of Ohio will participate in a statewide tornado drill and test its Emergency Alert System (EAS) on Wednesday, March 23 at 9:50 a.m. During this time, Ohio counties will sound and test their outdoor warning sirens. Schools, businesses and households are encouraged to practice their tornado drills and emergency plans.

According to the State Fire Marshal’s *Record of Emergency Evacuation Drills* (Form COM 5130), “Tornado drills shall be conducted at least once a month whenever school is in session during the tornado season. The ‘tornado season’ is the period from the first day of April to the last day of July (OFC 409.2).”

Schools that participate in the Statewide Tornado Drill in March can usually count it as their April drill. Schools should verify with their local fire chiefs.

**Know Your Risk** – Learn and understand the different types of weather hazards that occur in Ohio. Know how severe weather could impact your household, your job, your community. Ohio’s springtime hazards include tornadoes, thunderstorms, floods, and even snowstorms through early spring. Visit the OCSWA website at [www.weathersafety.ohio.gov](http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov) to view current weather in Ohio, and to review severe weather safety and preparedness information.

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“Teaching Ohioans Severe Weather Safety and Preparedness”

[www.weathersafety.ohio.gov](http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov)

During tornado drills or actual tornado warnings, remember to **DUCK!**

**D** – Go **DOWN** to the lowest level

**U** – Get **UNDER** something (such as a basement staircase or heavy table or desk)

**C** – **COVER** your head

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

**Know the Weather Terms** – Know the difference between storm watches and storm warnings.

For example, a *tornado watch* is issued by the National Weather Service when conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes in and close to the area. 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 stations newscasts for storm updates.

A *tornado warning* is issued by the NWS when a tornado has been detected by Doppler radar or sighted by storm spotters. If a tornado warning is issued for your area, do not stop to take pictures or shoot video. Seek safe shelter immediately. Many Ohio counties have outdoor warning sirens that sound during storm warnings. Continue to listen to your NOAA Weather Radio or TV or radio newscasts for up-to-date weather information.

Another way to receive notification of severe weather and other emergencies is through your mobile device. Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are emergency messages sent by authorized government alerting authorities through your mobile carrier. WEAs can alert you of extreme weather warnings, local emergencies requiring evacuation or immediate action, AMBER Alerts, and Presidential Alerts during a national emergency.

Also during the month of March, FEMA and the National Weather Service kickoff Severe Weather Safety Month, promoting flood, severe weather and tornado safety.

Know the difference between flood warnings, watches and advisories.

A **Flash Flood Warning** is issued by the NWS when flash flooding is imminent or occurring. If you are in a flood-prone area, move to higher ground immediately. A flash flood is a sudden violent flood that can take from minutes to hours to develop.

A **Flood Warning** is issued when the hazardous weather event is imminent or already happening. Listen to EAS messages for possible evacuation orders.

A **Flood Watch** is issued when conditions are favorable for flooding to occur. A watch does not mean flooding will occur, but it is possible.

A **Flood Advisory** is issued when flooding is not expected to be bad enough to issue a warning. However, the weather event could cause significant inconvenience. Caution should be exercised.

During any weather event (flood watches, tornado warnings, severe thunderstorms), continue listening to local weather reports via radio, television or NOAA Weather Radio.

Additional [flood safety information](#) is available on OCSWA's page.

The Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness is comprised of 16 agencies and organizations that are dedicated in educating Ohioans about the natural disasters that typically affect the state, and how to plan and prepare for severe weather incidents and home emergencies before they happen. For additional information on tornado and other severe weather safety and preparedness, visit the OCSWA website at [www.weathersafety.ohio.gov](http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov).