



COMMUNITY HEALTH
& THE ENVIRONMENT

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PLAN AHEAD TO WEATHER THE STORM

Recognize Potential Threats During Missouri's Severe Weather Awareness Week March 2-6

St. Charles County, Missouri – Warm breezes will soon follow the brisk chill of winter. However, this welcome relief will also bring the threat for severe weather and potential for flooding in our community. To help prepare for the dangers that may come, St. Charles County will recognize Missouri's **Severe Weather Awareness Week** from March 2-6 this year.

To remind us how to prepare for and react to the various natural dangers that commonly arise during the spring and summer months, each day of that week is devoted to a separate topic. On Monday, families and businesses are encouraged to discuss the common threats we face and the ways to safely respond to them. Tuesday's (March 3) focus is on tornado safety, with the annual statewide drill scheduled for 1:30 p.m., that afternoon. Residents, schools, businesses and other large groups are encouraged to practice their take-cover response plans as a part of this event (should threatening weather exist in our community that day, the drill will be postponed to Thursday). On Wednesday, the activities will relate to flash-flood safety, emphasizing the mantra "Turn Around – Don't Drown." On Thursday, the concentration will be on severe thunderstorm safety, recognizing the differences in the terms "Watch" and "Warning." A **WATCH** means that conditions are favorable for an event to occur, while a **WARNING** declares that the event is occurring in that community and immediate action is required. The week concludes Friday, where the benefits of staying informed — especially using a battery operated NOAA Weather Radio — are detailed.

Outdoor Weather Sirens (commonly referred to as "tornado sirens") and other public warning methods play a critical role in alerting us to severe weather and other dangerous situations. However, it's important to remember that these outdoor sirens are not meant to be heard indoors, which is why redundant systems are recommended. For indoor and personal notification, various emergency apps, text alerts, media announcements and the NOAA Weather Radio are designed to provide advanced warning for threats in our community.

Preparing in advance, before these weather events or other emergencies occur, will help you, your family, your business, and your neighborhood mitigate damages and return to normal activities more quickly. A 3-step program (**Ready in 3**) is designed to help in this preparation. The first step is to "**Create a Plan**" that is understood by all members of your group. This plan should determine how and where you would respond and should consider at least two scenarios — sheltering-in-place and evacuating. Step two, "**Prepare a Kit**," involves supplying your family, coworkers and pets with materials that sustain well-being for up to three days. The last step, "**Listen for Information**," will prepare you for ways to receive informational warnings and updates from government officials, local media or other responding agencies. To review this preparedness plan, please visit <http://www.sccmo.org/805/Preparedness-Planning-for-All-Hazards>.

(MORE)

Severe Weather Week (continued from Page One)

An emergency kit can be easily arranged using items you likely already have on hand. Collecting one gallon of water per person, per day and non-perishable foods (along with a manual can opener) will provide nourishment. A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries will enable you receive important updates to help protect your family and light your path, if power is lost. The pack should also contain any prescription medicines and a First Aid kit to care for minor injuries. If you do own pets, it's also necessary to include food, water, and waste removal items for them as well. Storing the kit in a waterproof and easily transportable case will allow you to bring it with you should you need to evacuate. To view items recommended for an emergency kit, please visit <http://www.sccmo.org/808/Family-Disaster-Supplies>.

Should any of these events occur in our community, volunteers would play an important role in the response and recovery efforts. Individuals interested in helping should contact their local municipal CERT program or call the St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment at (636) 949-7554 about becoming a Medical Reserve Corps volunteer. Community groups, churches and local businesses are invited to join St. Charles County's Community Organizations Active in Disaster chapter that will help coordinate area resources in times of emergency. For information on the COAD, please visit www.sccoad.org.

Emergency preparedness and disaster response is a coordinated effort involving local, state and federal participation. In St. Charles County, this effort is directed by the Police Department's Division of Emergency Management and assisted by the Department of Community Health and the Environment and various other entities. For more information on the County's efforts to prepare for and respond to potential hazards, please call (636) 949-3023 or visit <http://www.sccmo.org/680/Emergency-Management>.

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