



**STATE OF WISCONSIN**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS**  
**DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Edward F. Wall  
Administrator

Jim Doyle  
Governor

February 2010

Re: Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week – April 19-23, 2010

Dear School Officials:

Governor Doyle has proclaimed the week of April 19-23, 2010 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 staff and students are prepared.

Wisconsin averages 21 tornadoes annually. Last year, 16 tornadoes in Wisconsin were confirmed by the National Weather Services (NWS). Fortunately, no one was killed or injured but the tornadoes caused over \$150,000 in property damage.

On Thursday, April 22, 2010, 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 warnings will be issued by the NWS and will be staggered from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. The actual times will be posted in March on the Wisconsin Emergency Management website at: <http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov>

You do not have to participate during the April 22 drill and are welcome to hold your own drill at anytime. If actual severe weather occurs anywhere in the state on April 22, the tornado drill will be postponed to Friday, April 23, 2010 with the tornado watch and warnings issued at the same scheduled times. 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 ask for your support in promoting Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week. For more information on tornadoes and severe weather, contact your county emergency management director or your local NWS office.

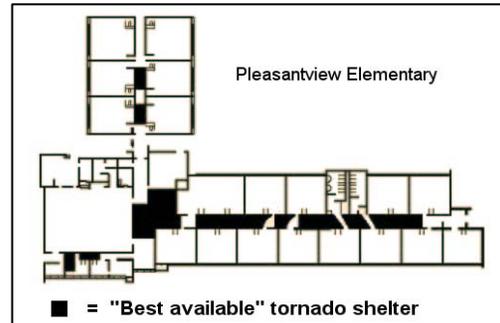
Thank you for your cooperation.

Edward F. Wall  
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 Drills 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 and hallways on the lowest floor and away from windows. Put as many walls as possible between the students and the storm.

- 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 the wall or put their backs to the wall, as long as they cover their head.



- Each school should have a NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards with battery back-up. Make sure the weather radio or other source of weather news is 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. Gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums offer no protection from tornado-strength winds.

- 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.**

# ***Tornado Safety at Home, Work, or at Play***

## **Have a Plan at Home, at Work, and When You're Away**

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement, and get under a sturdy table or the stairs. A specially-constructed “safe room” within a building offers the best protection. Use an internet search engine and search for “safe room” for more information.
- If a basement is not available, move to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and cover yourself with anything close at hand: towels, blankets, pillows. If possible, get under a sturdy table, desk or counter. Put as many walls as possible between you and the storm. Stay away from windows.
- If caught outdoors, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If you cannot quickly walk to shelter, get into a vehicle, buckle your seatbelt and drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. Now you have two options as a last resort:
  - Stay in the vehicle with the seatbelt on and place your head below the windows.
  - If you can safely get noticeably lower than the roadway, exit the vehicle and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands. Do not seek shelter under an overpass.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes. You should leave a mobile home and go to the designated storm shelter or the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building.
- When vacationing, always bring along a NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards and have a place of safety in mind in the event severe weather threatens.



### ***Tornado Myths and Truths***

**MYTH:** Areas near lakes, rivers, and hills are safe from tornadoes.

**TRUTH:** No place is safe from tornadoes. The tornado that struck Door County in August 1998 formed on the waters of Green Bay and moved onshore, causing over \$5 million in damage.

**MYTH:** The low pressure with a tornado causes buildings to explode as the tornado passes overhead.

**TRUTH:** Violent winds and debris slamming into buildings cause most structural damage.

**MYTH:** Windows should be opened before a tornado approaches to equalize pressure and minimize damage.

**TRUTH:** Leave windows alone. The most important action is to immediately go to a safe shelter.

**MYTH:** People caught in the open should seek shelter under highway overpasses.

**TRUTH:** Take shelter in a sturdy, reinforced building if at all possible. The winds of a tornado may actually increase in the tight space of an overpass, increasing the chance for injury.

# ***Lightning Safety for Coaches and Officials***

## **Lightning Kills...Play it Safe!**

- ⚡ All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. In an average year, lightning kills over 60 people in the U.S.—more than either tornadoes or hurricanes.
- ⚡ Lightning fatalities have been reported in Wisconsin in each of the last two years.
- ⚡ Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.
- ⚡ If you hear thunder, you are in danger! Anytime thunder is heard, the thunderstorm is close enough to pose an immediate lightning threat to your location.
- ⚡ Have a lightning safety plan. Designate a safe location before the event starts. Have specific guidelines for suspending the activity so that everyone has time to reach safety.
- ⚡ Prior to a practice or event, check the latest forecast. If thunderstorms are expected, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- ⚡ If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Avoid sheds, small or open shelters, dugouts, bleachers, and grandstands. If a sturdy building is not nearby, a hard-topped metal vehicle with windows closed will offer good protection.
- ⚡ If boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter.
- ⚡ Do not resume activities until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.

### ***Lightning Myths and Truths***

**MYTH:** If it is not raining, there is no danger from lightning.

**TRUTH:** Lightning can strike outside of rain. If you hear thunder, the storm is close enough to pose a lightning threat.

**MYTH:** The rubber soles of shoes or rubber tires on a vehicle will protect you from lightning.

**TRUTH:** Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide NO protection from lightning. The steel frame of a hard-topped vehicle provides increased protection if you are not touching metal. Although you may be injured if lightning strikes your car, you are much safer inside a vehicle than outside.

**MYTH:** People struck by lightning carry an electric charge and should not be touched.

**TRUTH:** Lightning-strike victims carry no charge and should be attended to immediately. Contact your local American Red Cross chapter for information on CPR and first aid classes.

**MYTH:** “Heat lightning” occurs after very hot summer days and poses no threat.

**TRUTH:** Heat lightning is a term used to describe lightning from a thunderstorm too far away for thunder to be heard.

# ***Flooding and Flash Flooding***

## **Turn Around...Don't Drown!**

- Many floods occur along streams and rivers. You can determine your risk by knowing your proximity to the water.
- Urban areas have a risk for flash floods due to increased runoff from buildings, roads and parking lots. Low spots, such as underpasses and basements, can become death traps.
- Dam failures have played a deadly role in the history of flash flooding. Be aware of dams upstream from your location. Earthen dams and associated embankments are more easily compromised by heavy rainfall.
- If a warning is issued or flooding is observed, move to higher ground.
- When camping or hiking near a stream or river, listen to the latest weather forecasts and keep away from the water if thunderstorms are expected.
- Do not attempt to walk or drive through a flooded roadway or intersection. Only six inches of fast-flowing water can knock an adult off their feet. And it takes just two feet of moving water to float a vehicle. Turn around, don't drown!
- Beware of flooding potential along the Lake Michigan shoreline in the wake of a line of strong thunderstorms with high winds that move across the lake. The winds push water to the east shoreline which then rebounds to the west shore as a flood wave called a "seiche."



### ***Flooding Myths and Truths***

**MYTH:** A 100-year flood occurs only once every 100 years.

**TRUTH:** The 100-year flood is an average; there is a 1% chance that a 100-year flood will occur in any given year.

**MYTH:** Flash floods occur only along flowing streams and rivers.

**TRUTH:** Flash floods can occur in urban areas where no streams are present.

**MYTH:** Homeowners insurance policies cover flooding.

**TRUTH:** Unfortunately, many homeowners do not find out until it is too late that their policies do not cover flooding. Contact your insurance company or agent to buy flood insurance.

**MYTH:** Larger vehicles, such as SUVs and pickups, are safe to drive through flood waters.

**TRUTH:** Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles, including SUVs and pickup trucks. If you come to a water-covered road or intersection, turn around, don't drown!

# Stay Informed with NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards

## The “Smoke Alarm” for Severe Weather

- NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) All Hazards is a public warning system that broadcasts forecasts, warnings, and emergency information 24 hours a day directly to the public.
- 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 (e.g., tornado, floods, high winds, blizzards)
  - ▶ Accidents (e.g., chemical release, train derailments, nuclear power emergencies)
  - ▶ Terrorist attacks



*America is safer when our schools are safer*

*a new program to protect our children*



During the last couple of years, weather radios were distributed to all schools in your community to help safeguard your children. This program was sponsored by the Department of Education, Department of Commerce, and Department of Homeland Security. More information on the program can be found at:

<http://public-alert-radio.nws.noaa.gov>

- 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.
- If you have any questions about weather radios, contact your local National Weather Service office.

### Related Web Sites

NOAA Weather Radio Home Page.....	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/nwr">www.weather.gov/nwr</a>
NWS All Hazards Web Page.....	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/nwr/allhazard.htm">www.weather.gov/nwr/allhazard.htm</a>
NWR Coverage in Wisconsin.....	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/mkx/nwr-table.php">www.weather.gov/mkx/nwr-table.php</a>

# 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*

### Lightning Safety

<http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov>

### Flood Safety

<http://www.floodsafety.noaa.gov>

### Tornado Preparedness Plan for Schools

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

### StormReady – Community Preparedness

<http://www.stormready.noaa.gov>

### American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org>

### Wisconsin Emergency Management

<http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov>

### Ready Wisconsin

<http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

### FEMA For Kids

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

### Ready Classroom: K-8 Preparedness Resources

<http://readyclassroom.discoveryeducation.com>

### Ready: Prepare, Plan, Stay Informed

<http://www.ready.gov>

### American Red Cross Masters of Disaster

<http://www2.redcross.org/disaster/masters>



# ***Family Disaster Plan***

## **Be Prepared**

Families should be prepared for all hazards that could affect their area. The National Weather Service and Wisconsin Emergency Management urge every family to develop a family disaster plan.

Where will your family be when disaster strikes? They could be anywhere—at work, at school, or in the car. How will you find each other? Will you know if your children are safe? Disaster may force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services—water, gas, electricity, or telephone—were cut off?

Put together a family disaster plan that answers those questions—and practice it.

## **A Disaster Supplies Kit should include...**

- A three-day supply of water and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing per person.
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit, including prescription medicines.
- A battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio.
- Emergency tools, including a portable radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card or cash.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Don't forget about your pets and their food and medicine.

## ***Did You Know...***

### **Wisconsin Tornado Weather Facts**

- Wisconsin averages 21 tornadoes a year, but in the last few years alone, we've had as many as 62 and as few as 13.
- The peak tornado season in Wisconsin is April to August, but tornadoes can occur any time of year, like the January 7, 2008 storms near Kenosha.
- Tornadoes can occur any time during the day or night, but are most frequent between 4 pm and 9 pm.
- About 80% of tornadoes that hit Wisconsin are relatively weak, with winds under 110 mph. Only 1% are violent with winds over 170 mph.

### **Other Weather Awareness Dates**

Wisconsin's NOAA Weather Radio  
Awareness Day

*May 12, 2010*

Wisconsin's Heat Awareness Day

*June 10, 2010*

National Lightning Safety  
Awareness Week

*June 20–June 26, 2010*

Wisconsin's Winter Weather  
Awareness Week

*November 8–12, 2010*