

# **Peoria City/County Emergency Management News Release**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

City of Peoria Office of Emergency Management: Kent M Tomblin (309 494-8741)  
Dwain S. Deppolder (309 494-8077)

Peoria County Emergency Management Agency Vicky Turner (309-691-3111)  
Carolyn Hayes (309-691-3111).

## **PREPAREDNESS IS CRITICAL AS SEVERE WEATHER SEASON IS UPON US.**

***Peoria City/County wide Tornado Warning system will be tested at 10 AM on 19<sup>th</sup>  
April 2012***

Even though it is only early April, The National Weather Service in Lincoln, Illinois has advised us it already looks like 2012 is taking over where 2011 left off. Deadly tornadoes ripped through southern Illinois during the early morning of February 29<sup>th</sup>, illustrating that these storms can impact us any time of the day or year.

To help the citizens of Peoria and Peoria County be more aware of the dangers of severe storms, we are asking that ALL schools, business, and residents of the Peoria City/County to review their "All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan" and put it to the test. Look at the section that covers Tornado Preparedness and actually take cover when the Outdoor Warning Sirens sound Thursday April 19<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am. We will also be doing a practice of the cable interrupt. This is a type of warning that allows us to interrupt Comcast Cable advising you of the test. Unfortunately we will not have the opportunity to test the Emergency Alert System (EAS) with the emergency weather alert radios. Again, people are encouraged to use this time to practice their tornado safety plans at home, schools, businesses and anywhere groups gather.

If you do not have a plan or are not sure of what action to take, please do not hesitate to call the City of Peoria Fire Dept Office of Emergency Management (309-494-8077) or the Peoria County Emergency Management Agency (309-691-3111)

Severe storms, flooding and tornadoes wreaked havoc across much of our nation, including the state of Illinois, in 2011. Nearly 1,700 tornadoes impacted our country last year with a heavy toll on life and property. Tornadoes killed 550 people in the U.S. during 2011 – the most since 1925 – and more than 5,400 were injured. Property and crop losses due to tornadoes and severe thunderstorm winds exceeded \$10 Billion nationwide, the most on record.

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is also taking part in preparedness efforts by offering safety tips on the state's preparedness web page, [www.readyillinois.gov](http://www.readyillinois.gov) the entire month of April.

“Outdoor warning sirens are a small part of the warning process during threatening weather, not the only part.” said Chris Miller, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the NWS in Lincoln. “Around 30% of all tornadoes occur at night when it is difficult to hear the outdoor sirens in your home – especially while asleep. Weather alert radios will wake you up and give you potentially life-saving warnings. They are like having your own personal storm siren.” said Miller.

The state of Illinois averages 46 tornadoes and hundreds of reports of large hail and wind damage each year. We cannot stop severe storms from occurring, but there is something that everyone can do to prepare for these inevitable forces of nature:

- **Know the terms related to tornadoes and severe storms.**
  - A **TORNADO** is a violently rotating column of air that extends from the base of the thunderstorm cloud to the ground.
  - A **SEVERE THUNDERSTORM** can produce hail one inch in diameter or larger, and/or wind gusts around 60 mph or higher that can result in damage to trees, structures, or power lines. Severe thunderstorm winds can be stronger, and produce more damage, than 70% of the tornadoes that affect Illinois.
  - A **WATCH** means that tornadoes or severe thunderstorms are possible, and you need to watch the weather closely.
  - A **WARNING** means that a tornado or severe thunderstorm has been detected by radar, or has been reported by a trained storm spotter. Seek safe shelter immediately if your location is in the path of the storm.
- **Use several sources to receive warning information, don't just rely on sirens. Weather alert radios, local broadcasters, weather related web pages, social media, and computer & phone apps are a few suggestions.**
- **Stay alert for the latest hazardous weather information, especially at night or if traveling.**
- **Identify safe indoor shelters. A basement is best. If you don't have a basement, go to the lowest possible floor in a closet or hallway, away from windows and exterior doors. If traveling, get to a nearby building quickly. If none is available, as a last resort, lie flat in a ditch and protect your head.**
- **Storm warnings are issued for portions of counties. Know the name of the county you live in, and the counties you travel through.**

- **If it is safe to do so, contact family members and friends when you become aware of a severe thunderstorm or tornado that may threaten them.**

For more information about being adequately prepared for severe weather, visit the following web sites:

**NWS Lincoln “Severe Weather Safety” web page**  
at: [www.weather.gov/Lincoln/?n=svr-prep](http://www.weather.gov/Lincoln/?n=svr-prep)

**Ready Illinois Gov**  
<http://ready.illinois.gov/>