



Severe Weather Awareness Week

MINNESOTA SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK - APRIL 21-25, 2014

Minnesota Severe Weather Awareness Week is **April 21-25, 2014** with two statewide tornado drills on **Thursday, April 24 at 1:45 p.m. and 6:55 p.m.** This annual public event is designed to remind individuals, families, businesses, schools, and institutions that it's essential to plan ahead for Minnesota's severe spring and summer weather.

An informed, involved community is more resilient to disaster, and being prepared helps reduce the risks and costs of hazardous weather events. An easy way to get prepared is by participating in **Severe Weather Awareness Week (SWAW)**. The statewide **tornado drills on Thursday, April 24** provide an excellent opportunity for citizens to prepare their homes, families, neighborhoods, and communities!

Here are a few simple ideas on how individuals, families, businesses, and schools can participate during **Minnesota Severe Weather Awareness Week**:

PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

- [Create or update emergency plans](#) with your entire family so everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency. Ensure everyone has up-to-date contact info and knows what to do.
- Practice your family plan during [the evening tornado drill on April 24 at 6:55 p.m.](#)** Have everyone build a family emergency kit together.
- [Check with places](#) your family spends time, such as schools, workplaces, churches, markets, or sports facilities to learn what their emergency plans are.
- [Share the plans](#) for these areas with your entire family and talk about what you would do if your family was not together during a disaster.

PREPARE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- [Involve your neighbors.](#) Help prepare your neighborhood by asking, "What's **our** plan?" Talk to your neighbors about their preparedness plans and make sure your plans are compatible. Find out who has special needs and might need help in an emergency.
- [Plan with your neighborhood.](#) Ask your Home Owners Association, your Tenants Group or Neighborhood Civic Association to make emergency preparedness an agenda item during your next meeting. Make sure there is an evacuation plan for your neighborhood, and communicate it to your neighbors.
- [Help neighbors get informed.](#) Host a neighborhood preparedness meeting. Invite your local emergency manager or responders to help lead the discussions.

Keeping Minnesota *Ready*



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PREPARE YOUR COMMUNITY

- [Include preparedness activities at community events.](#) Consider local events already scheduled in your community, such as state or county fairs, festivals, parades, or sporting events.
- [Encourage local governments and civic groups to help.](#) Ask local Scouts, Lions, chambers of commerce, etc. to set up a booth to distribute emergency preparedness information, recruit volunteers, and discuss preparedness plans within your community.
- [Host a Local Preparedness Fair.](#) Reach out to prominent organizations in your community, such as faith-based and community organizations, businesses, and schools to help coordinate a preparedness fair.
- [Find out how to create or participate in a Citizen Corps - Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\) in your town or neighborhood.](#)

PREPARE YOUR WORKPLACE

- Update and distribute emergency contact information to your employees. Additionally, create and distribute a list of important emergency numbers. [Designate critical function or emergency personnel.](#)
- [Organize an emergency preparedness procedures review](#) with employees to review your company's emergency plans. Ensure everyone understands their roles in a "what if?" scenario.
- Host a [disaster preparedness brown bag lunch for employees.](#) Invite local emergency managers to give a disaster preparedness briefing.
- Get a [NOAA Weather Radio](#) and put it on display in your break room or other high-traffic locations and encourage employees to get their own for their homes as well.
- Put an updated copy of the [facility emergency plan](#) on everyone's desk or in email and have group meetings to review it.
- [Showcase instructional videos or distribute preparedness information.](#) Provide information online about training opportunities.
- [Conduct business continuity training.](#) Contact a local business continuity or emergency management professional and work with company leadership to create or update disaster and continuity plans.
- Conduct office evacuation/shelter-in-place exercises and drills. [Schedule an emergency exercise or drill.](#) Once completed, evaluate and decide if new procedures or training are needed. Consult with local responders or emergency managers to participate, observe or advise.
- Distribute emergency preparedness messages. Include emergency preparedness messages in communication touch points such as e-mails, newsletter articles, bill stuffers, receipts, and social media.

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PREPARE YOUR SCHOOL

The **tornado drill on April 24 at 1:45 p.m.** is a perfect opportunity for schools to conduct preparedness training, exercises and education. A carefully developed tornado drill should keep students and staff in good practice, and work out any problems before a real event occurs.

- Post signs.** Large and [easy-to-read maps or signs with arrows](#) should be posted throughout the hallways directing people to the safe areas.
- Backup alarms.** If the school's alarm system relies on electricity, have a compressed-air horn or megaphone or other backup device to sound the alert in case of power failure.
- Make special provisions** to [evacuate and shelter students](#) in portable classrooms. Portable classrooms are like mobile homes - exceptionally dangerous in a tornado or high winds.
- Plan and exercise procedures** for [any functionally disabled students](#) to ensure mobility in an evacuation. Work with the families of students with other special needs and specialists assigned to help them.
- Make sure several staff members are** [trained in how to turn off electricity and gas](#) in the event the school is damaged.
- Communicate the** [school emergency plan](#) with parents and families. Explain the policy for keeping children at school beyond regular hours if threatening weather is expected.
- Educate the faculty and students** about [outdoor weather policies and warnings](#) for severe weather.
- Establish and communicate** [the severe weather policy](#) for sports or special events and inform everyone of the policy. Plan for gymnasiums, theaters, and lunch rooms or other large spaces to be evacuated in an emergency.
- Know the county in which your school** sits, and keep [a highway map](#) nearby to follow storm movement from weather bulletins. Online maps and weather sources can be valuable, but if the power is out, it helps to have paper maps.
- Make sure the school's** [NOAA Weather Radio](#) is operating (with battery backup) and can be heard by staff. Know what the different warnings mean. Make sure the radio is properly programmed for the county.
- Establish and** [practice the in-school emergency communications plan](#) to ensure that all teachers, classes, and staff are informed of any emergency -including those on athletic fields or playgrounds.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Minnesota Severe Weather Awareness Week](#)

[National Weather Service](#)

[FEMA- Ready.gov](#)

hsem.dps.mn.gov

