



COLUMBIA
COUNTY

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All Clerks,

Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week April 11-15, 2016

Governor Scott Walker has proclaimed the week of April 11-15, 2016 as Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin. During Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week, we are asking that everyone take time to go over the procedures needed when severe weather strikes to ensure that you are prepared.

Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes annually. In 2015, 17 tornadoes were reported in Wisconsin by the National Weather Service (NWS).

On **Thursday, April 14, 2016**, two statewide tornado drills are planned. A **mock tornado watch** will be issued statewide by the NWS at **1:00 pm**. The NWS will then issue a statewide mock tornado warning at **1:45 pm**. This **drill ends at 2:00 pm**. This drill will be an ideal opportunity for everyone to practice their safety procedures for severe weather. We encourage businesses to participate and practice their safety procedures as well.

For the first time, an **evening drill** is scheduled on the same day with a **mock tornado warning** to take place at **6:55pm**. This gives everyone a great opportunity to practice their severe weather plans at **home or their workplace**.

Columbia County will be participating by sounding the sirens at the prescribed times as we would during a real event.

We encourage you to participate during the April 14 drills; however, you are welcome to hold your own drill at any time. The statewide drills will be postponed until Friday, April 15, 2016 if there is a threat of severe weather in Wisconsin on Thursday. The drill will go on in all other conditions including non-severe weather (clouds, rain, dark sky, scattered thunderstorms, etc.). If severe weather occurs on Friday, the drill will be cancelled. Notification of the drill status will be posted by 10:00 am the morning of the drill at <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov>.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Emergency Management and the National Weather Service encourage your participation in promoting Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week. For more information on tornadoes and severe weather, contact your county emergency management director at 608-742-4166 Ext. 1309 or your local NWS office.

Thank you for your support.

Patrick Beghin
Columbia County Emergency Management

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 drill 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 on the lowest floor and away from windows. Hallways that have doors to the outside can act as wind tunnels, so avoid these areas. Put as many walls as possible between the students and the storm. Gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums offer no protection from tornado-strength winds.
- Weather safety plans should take into account the amount of time it takes for students to get to shelter areas.
- 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 a wall or put their back to a wall, as long as they cover their head.
- Each school should have a NOAA Weather Radio with battery back-up and other methods to receive emergency weather information. Make sure the weather radio and other source of weather news is always 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.
- 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. Search on the internet for "safe room" for more information.
- If a basement is not available, move to a small interior room 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.
- Make sure you have **multiple ways** to receive weather information. A NOAA Weather Radio, access to local TV, and smart phone apps can keep you informed when 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, August 1988, 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 should lie on the ground and cover their heads with their hands.

TRUTH: People should lie on the ground and cover their heads with their hands. The winds can lift you.