



Press Release

**Forsyth County Urges Residents to Practice Tornado Safety
March 1-7 is Severe Weather Preparedness Week *Statewide Drill is March 4***

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Forsyth County, N.C. – Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Emergency Management urges residents to practice tornado safety by participating in the statewide drill next month. March 1-7 is Severe Weather Preparedness Week in North Carolina, and Forsyth County officials want residents to prepare and be alert to potentially damaging thunderstorms and possible tornadoes.

“While the spring is the peak tornado season, severe thunderstorms can strike quickly throughout the year,” said Melton Sadler, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Emergency Management Director, said. “The best way to be ready is to plan and prepare. It’s critical to have emergency plans in place, put together an emergency supplies kit and listen for weather alerts.”

Forsyth County schools and government buildings will participate in the statewide tornado drill Wednesday, March 4, at 9:30 a.m. Test messages will be broadcast on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio and the Emergency Alert system.

“I urge all county residents to participate in the drill wherever they may be that morning,” Melton Sadler said. “It is important to know what to do and where to go when severe weather strikes.”

In 2014, the National Weather Service issued 81 tornado warnings for North Carolina and recorded 36 tornadoes that killed one and injured 34 people. Combined, the tornadoes caused more than \$22 million in damages. The NWS also issued more than 632 severe thunderstorm warnings, and recorded more than 686 incidents of severe thunderstorms with damaging winds and/or large hail. The severe storms killed three people and injured seven others, resulting in nearly \$3.5 million in damages.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Emergency Management officials recommend having a weather radio that broadcasts alerts from the National Weather Service whenever severe weather occurs. Many tornado fatalities have occurred at night when people are asleep and less likely to receive a warning without a weather radio.

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Emergency officials recommend people use the following safety tips:

- Know the terms: WATCH means a tornado is possible. WARNING means a tornado has been spotted; take shelter immediately.
- Know where the nearest safe room is, such as a basement or interior room and away from windows, and go there immediately if you hear or see a tornado.
- If driving, you should leave your vehicle immediately to seek safety in an adequate structure. Do not try to outrun a tornado in your vehicle, and do not stop under an overpass or a bridge.
- If you are outdoors, and there is no shelter available, take cover in a low-lying flat area. Watch out for flying debris.
- Following a storm, wear sturdy shoes, long sleeves and gloves when walking on or near debris, and be aware of exposed nails and broken glass.
- Be aware of damaged power or gas lines and electrical systems that may cause fires, electrocution or explosions.

More information on tornadoes and overall emergency preparedness can be found online at <http://www.readyforsyth.org/> or www.ReadyNC.org. Please take a moment to 'LIKE' ReadyForsyth on Facebook to receive the most recently updated information. Winston-Salem/Forsyth County emergency officials encourage residents to download the free ReadyNC mobile app.

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