Keeping Minnesota **Ready**

Each year, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, in partnership with the National Weather Service and other state and local government agencies sponsors **Severe Weather Awareness Week**. The purpose of the week is to inform, remind and prepare the citizens of Minnesota about the potential hazards of the upcoming severe weather season. Each day of the week focuses on a different topic.

The highlight events are two statewide tornado drills conducted on Thursday of the week.

SIREN AND NOAA WEATHER RADIO ACTIVATION

During the drills, **local sirens and all NOAA Weather Radios** in Minnesota and Wisconsin will sound off with a simulated tornado warning for both afternoon and evening drills. This event was created to give everyone the opportunity to review their emergency plans and procedures, and practice emergency drills at work or at home.

Remember - counties and cities in Minnesota own, operate and maintain all local warning sirens, and set their own policies on how and when they are activated. Please check with your local public safety officials for details on when warning sirens are sounded in your community. **Note: There is no such thing as an all-clear siren.**

Check with your local county emergency manager to find out local siren policies.

Most local and statewide radio, TV and cable stations will be participating in the drills. Television viewers and radio station listeners and TV viewers should hear or see a simulated tornado warning message **at 1:45 p.m. and 6:55 p.m**. The tornado drill warning should last about one minute. When the test is completed, stations should return to normal programming.

THE DRILLS

The first drill traditionally occurs on **Thursday afternoon at 1:45 p.m**., when jurisdictions across Minnesota sound their outdoor warning sirens. Schools, businesses and other facilities are encouraged to conduct a tornado drill at this time to practice their emergency tornado sheltering plans.

The reason for a **second drill at 6:55 p.m**. is that severe weather - including tornadoes - occurs most often between 3 and 8 p.m. While the first drill allows institutions and day workers a time to practice their emergency procedures, it does not allow second-shift workers the same opportunity. More importantly, the 6:55 p.m. tornado drill also allows individuals and families the opportunity to practice their own emergency plans.

Want to participate in the drill but don't know how? Check out this information sheet for some ideas on how you or your organization can participate.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

On Thursday April 24, 2014 simulated tornado watches and warnings will be issued to test the statewide warning and communications systems. All counties in Minnesota normally participate in the first drill at 1:45 p.m. unless actual severe weather is expected. The schedule is as follows:

1:00 p.m. All six weather National Weather Service offices that serve Minnesota will issue a simulated tornado watch (TOA). NOAA Weather Radios will activate with the real TOA code.

1:45 p.m. The National Weather Service will issue a simulated tornado warning (TOR) for Minnesota counties. Note that most cities and counties will activate outdoor warning siren systems. NOAA Weather Radios will activate with the real TOR code.

2:00 p.m. The National Weather Service will issue an "End of Test" message using the Severe Weather Statement product. No alarm on weather radio.

6:55 pm. The National Weather Service offices will issue another simulated tornado warning (TOR). NOAA Weather Radios will activate with the real TOR code.

7:10 pm. The National Weather Service will issue an "End of Test" message using the Severe Weather Statement product. No alarm on weather radio.

EFFECT ON TV/RADIO/CABLE AND WIRELESS EMERGENCY ALERTS

These simulated tornado warnings are transmitted with a test code that is flagged by the wireless alert warning systems and therefore there is no wireless emergency alert on cell phones should sound for these drills.

In general, software at TV stations also receives the test code indicating a test, and may not send a message. However, if TV/Radio/Cable uses the NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) as the input signal to their emergency broadcast system equipment, then the NOAA Weather Radio broadcast will be heard. The audio announcement will mention "test" several times. For specific details, please check with your local broadcast station or cable service provider.

POSTPONEMENT OR CANCELLATION OF THE DRILLS

If real severe weather is a significant threat on or before April 24, any of the six National Weather Service offices that serve Minnesota may postpone the simulated watch and warning to Friday, April 25. If the weather threat is continuing into Friday, then the drills may be cancelled. Any postponement or cancellation will be announced through the media.