



City of Portsmouth Office of Emergency Management “Tornado Preparedness Day”

Gov. Robert F. McDonnell has declared March 16, 2010 as “Tornado Preparedness Day”. Last year, 16 tornados struck the Commonwealth. In 2008, three tornados in Suffolk caused nearly 200 injuries and over \$28 million in damage. No part of Virginia is immune from tornados. They can hit any time of the year and at any time of the day. There are two things that every family, business, and organization should do to get ready:

1. Get a NOAA Weather Radio with Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) alerts.
2. Be familiar with what to do when a tornado watch or warning is issued.

“NOAA Weather Radios are the best way of getting tornado warnings,” said Bill Sammler, NWS warning coordination meteorologist. “A network of radio stations broadcasts weather data from the nearest National Weather Service office. When a tornado warning is issued, the Weather Radio sounds an alarm followed by information on where the storm is, which way it’s moving, and telling people in its path to take cover.”

To conduct a tornado drill, first choose a safe area and let all participants know where they are expected to go. When choosing safe areas, remember that tornadoes strike at all hours. Safe places need to be easy to get to and uncluttered in case of darkness when people may not be fully aware or alert.

- Announce the start of the drill.
- Participants should act as though a tornado warning has been issued for the immediate area or a tornado has been sighted nearby. They should move as quickly as possible to a previously designated tornado safe area.
- Safe areas are basements, or interior rooms, bathrooms, closets or hallways on the lowest level of a building. Stay away from windows.
- Once in a safe area, people should crouch down or sit on the floor, facing down, and cover their head with their hands.
- After everyone is in the protective position, announce that the tornado has passed and the drill is over.

- When the drill is over, discuss the drill and ways to improve it, including notification, safe areas and way to get to them.

Know the Signs

Strong, persistent rotation in the base of a cloud.

Whirling dust or debris on the ground under a cloud base – tornadoes sometimes have no visible funnel.

Hail or heavy rain followed by dead calm or a fast, intense wind shift. Many tornadoes, especially in Virginia, are wrapped in heavy precipitation and can't be seen.

Loud, continuous roar or rumble, which doesn't fade in a few seconds like thunder.

If it's night, look for small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level (as opposed to silvery lightning up in the clouds). These lights are power lines being snapped by very strong wind, maybe a tornado.

Persistent lowering of the cloud base.

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