



For Immediate Release  
March 1, 2011

Contact: Dana Woodson  
(757) 393-8641

### **Residents Encouraged to Hold Tornado Drills**

City of Portsmouth residents can practice taking cover from tornadoes by participating in the annual Statewide Tornado Drill, set for Tuesday, March 15, at 9:45 a.m. The drill is a joint effort of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service.

To get instructions for conducting a tornado drill and to register for participating in the statewide drill, go to <http://www.vaemergency.com/threats/tornado/index.cfm>. Nearly half a million Virginians already have registered.

“Everyone needs to know what to do if a tornado warning is issued for their area,” said Michael Cline, state coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. “Holding a tornado drill at least once a year should be part of every family, business and school emergency plan. The more you practice, the better you can respond to an emergency.”

To start the March 15 drill, the NWS will send a test tornado warning that will trigger a tone alert and broadcast message on NOAA Weather Radio, simulating what listeners will hear during an actual tornado warning.

“It’s vitally important that everyone have access to a Weather Radio to hear tornado warnings as soon as they are issued,” said Bill Sammler, NWS warning coordination meteorologist. “A NOAA Weather Radio with SAME alerts is the fastest way for you to get a tornado warning.”

SAME stands for Specific Area Message Encoding, a feature that allows individuals to program their radios to hear alerts for their areas. NOAA Weather Radios are available at electronics and sporting goods stores, discount and department stores, and online. Some have strobe lights for the hearing impaired. They come in battery-powered models and many also have AM/FM bands.

Tornadoes are common in Virginia. In fact, 62 tornadoes struck the Commonwealth during the past three years, injuring more than 220 citizens and causing nearly \$48 million damage to homes, businesses and other property.

For more information on emergency preparedness, call the City of Portsmouth’s Office of Emergency Management at (757) 393-8338.

-end-