

Minnesota Severe Weather Awareness Week

APRIL 17-21, 2017

Tornado Drill Day – Thursday April 20

Are You Ready for Severe Weather?

RICE COUNTY — Severe Weather Awareness Week takes place April 17-21 this year, with the statewide tornado drills on Thursday, April 20.

Historically, early springtime is “flood season” in our state — but in 1998 it was only late March when violent storms brought 13 tornadoes to St. Peter and Comfrey and also 1 to Lonsdale and rural Rice County areas east of Lonsdale. On July 13, 2013, Rice County received over 8 inches of rain in a short time period over areas in the northern half of the County causing flash flooding conditions and washing roads away throughout those areas. Late September is typically considered a “dry time” – yet on September 22, 2010 and again in 2017, more than 10 inches of rain inundated southeastern Minnesota and flooded many communities, including communities in Rice County.

If that wasn't enough, between March and September of 2010, Minnesota experienced a record 113 tornadoes, (the most in the U.S.) with a total of 48 on a single day in June, some of those twisters occurred just south of Rice County; not to mention that this year Minnesota broke the record for the earliest tornados on record – three reported on March 6, 2017.

The lesson from these events is that Minnesota weather hazards can happen anytime and anywhere, and the key to maintaining your personal safety and well-being is to be aware of the threats, be prepared, and know how to respond when those threats are approaching.

An informed, involved community is more resilient to disaster, and being prepared helps reduce the risks and costs of hazardous weather events. This year's focus for Severe Weather Awareness Week is a simple but important concept: “*Are You Ready?*” This question can apply to almost any emergency situation but thinking through the answer now could be a life saver later. Nearly every county in Minnesota experiences some type of severe weather threat every season. Being informed about the threats and having a plan to deal with them can often be the most important protection anyone can have.

To help citizens achieve these goals, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, along with the National Weather Service sponsor Severe Weather Awareness Week annually. An easy way to get prepared is by participating in Severe Weather Awareness Week. The statewide tornado drills provide an excellent opportunity for citizens to prepare their homes, families, neighborhoods, and communities!

This year's event takes place April 17-21, with Tornado Drill Day on Thursday, April 20. Outdoor warning sirens and NOAA Weather Radios will sound in a simulated tornado warning.

Schools, businesses, hospitals and other organizations are encouraged to practice emergency plans during the statewide tornado drill at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday. A second drill at 6:55 p.m. will take place in most counties, including Rice County, to allow families and second-shift workers to practice sheltering plans.

Everyone is encouraged to create a plan, build an emergency kit and practice drills. “Every individual, family and business should take this opportunity to prepare and practice their weather emergency plans,” states Jennifer Hauer-Schmitz, Rice County Emergency Management Director. “Dangerous weather such as severe thunderstorms or tornadoes do not follow any kind of a pattern, and they are common in Minnesota. That is why it is so important to know what to do when the weather strikes - there’s no substitute for practice when the real thing comes along.”

Find more lifesaving information at www.severeweather.state.mn.us. The site contains information on weather alerts and warnings, thunderstorms, hail, lightning, flash floods, tornadoes and heat waves, along with instructions on how to make a survival kit, develop a plan to shelter or escape, and avoid surprises by staying informed of weather conditions. There is also weather information provided in eight different languages.

Please remember the statewide tornado drill on Thursday, April 20, 2017 and plan to participate at 1:45 p.m., 6:55 p.m. or both! Don’t let severe weather catch you unprepared! Get ready during Severe Weather Awareness Week!

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