

## **Catawba County Urges Residents to Practice Tornado Safety March 4-10 is Severe Weather Preparedness Week**

NEWTON, N.C. – Catawba County Emergency Management urges area residents to prepare for severe weather that may occur with little to no warning this spring.

March 4-10 is Severe Weather Preparedness Week in North Carolina. Catawba County officials encourage residents to participate in the annual Statewide Tornado Drill March 7 to practice their emergency plan in case severe weather strikes our state.

“Spring is quickly approaching, and so is the potential for severe weather,” said Karyn Yaussy, Catawba County Emergency Management Coordinator. “Severe thunderstorms involve a variety of dangerous weather conditions such as hail, flash floods and tornadoes. These storms can develop so rapidly; that having a safety plan in place beforehand is critical.”

Public schools in the county and many government buildings will participate in the Statewide Tornado Drill on Wednesday, March 7, at 9:30 a.m. The National Weather Service (NWS) will broadcast the drill over NOAA weather radio stations and the Emergency Alert System.

“Practice makes perfect rings true when it comes to preparing for severe weather, especially tornadoes. The time you take now to prepare will make all the difference if and when disaster strikes,” Yaussy said. “I encourage all county residents, businesses and organizations to participate in the drill.”

In 2017, Catawba County experienced tornadoes in May and October that caused damage to numerous homes and businesses across the county. The NWS issued 85 tornado warnings for North Carolina and recorded 30 tornadoes. There were 104 flood or flash flood events across the state. In addition, the NWS issued 561 severe thunderstorm warnings, and recorded 548 incidents of severe thunderstorms with damaging winds and 102 damaging hail events.

Catawba County Emergency Management officials recommend having a family emergency plan in place so all members know where to go, who to call and what to do during a disaster. Officials also advise residents to stay alert by listening to weather radios that broadcast alerts from the National Weather Service.

If a tornado occurs, emergency officials urge residents to 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 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 without available shelter, 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.nws.noaa.gov/om/tornado> or [www.ReadyNC.org](http://www.ReadyNC.org). Catawba County emergency officials encourage residents to download the free ReadyNC mobile app.

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