



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor proclaims March 15 as Tornado Preparedness Day

More than 760,000 have registered to participate in Statewide Tornado Drill

RICHMOND, VA – No part of Virginia is immune from tornadoes. They can hit at any time of the year and at any time of the day. To emphasize the necessity of preparing and practicing for tornadoes, Governor Bob McDonnell has proclaimed March 15 as Tornado Preparedness Day.

On that date, all Virginians can practice taking cover from tornadoes by participating in the annual Statewide Tornado Drill, set for 9:45 a.m. The drill is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service.

To start the 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. This will prompt radio and television stations to broadcast a tone and message.

When the test tornado warning is sounded, people should move as quickly as possible to a previously designated tornado safe area in their building. Safe areas are basements, interior rooms, bathrooms, closets or hallways on the lowest level of a building. In choosing a safe area, stay away from windows. Once in the safe area, crouch down or sit on the floor, facing down, and cover heads with hands.

To get complete instructions for conducting a tornado drill and to register, go to www.vaemergency.com. Registration is voluntary, and about 760,000 Virginians already have signed up, indicating their intention to participate in the drill.

“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. “Every family, business and school should hold a tornado drill at least once a year. The more we practice, the better we can respond during an emergency. And everyone needs access to NOAA Weather Radio.”

NOAA Weather Radios with SAME alerts 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.

“NOAA Weather Radio is the fastest way to get a tornado warning,” said Bill Sammler, NWS warning coordination meteorologist. “This 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. This radio could be a lifesaver.”

During the past three years, 62 tornadoes struck the Commonwealth, injuring more than 220 citizens and causing nearly \$48 million damage to homes, businesses and other property.

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