

Be prepared before "the day before the storm."

On the heels of two significant winter storms in the region and with the knowledge that we could experience more severe weather in the months ahead, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) kicks off Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

From March 3-9, these and other federal partners, state and local agencies, not-for-profits, businesses, and individuals focus on how to prepare for severe weather, and take steps to ready themselves for weather events common to this region.



Each year, individuals are killed or seriously injured by tornadoes and other types of severe weather, despite advance warning. In 2012, there were more than 450 weather-related fatalities and nearly 2,600 injuries. Severe weather knows no boundaries and affects every individual.

"There are a number of reasons why people wait until just before a storm hits to take care of those important to-do's; things like - grocery shopping, getting household supplies or even making a plan for what to do once the storm hits. But there are things individuals can and should do well before the day before the storm," said Beth Freeman, regional administrator for FEMA Region VII. "We'd like to see more people prepared and have a plan in place for what they're going to do—that's what Severe Weather Preparedness Week is all about."

Know Your Risk

The first step to becoming weather-ready is to understand the type of hazardous weather that can affect where you live and work, and how the weather could impact you and your family. Every state in the United States has experienced tornadoes and severe weather, so everyone is exposed to some degree of risk. In the last several years our region has had to deal with record flooding, horrific tornadoes and, most recently, record snowfall in some areas. You can help protect yourself and family by regularly monitoring weather forecasts and by visiting www.Ready.gov/severe-weather for valuable information about how to deal with these and other types of severe weather that could impact you.

Pledge and Take Action

Be a Force of Nature by taking the Pledge to Prepare at ready.gov/severe-weather. When you pledge to prepare, you will take the first step to making sure that you and your family are prepared for severe weather. This includes filling out your family communications plan that you can email to yourself, putting an emergency kit together, keeping important papers and valuables in a safe place, and getting involved.

Obtain a NOAA Weather Radio, and check to see if your cell phone is equipped to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts and sign up for localized alerts from emergency management officials. Stay informed by having multiple sources for weather alerts - NOAA Weather Radio, Weather.gov, and Wireless Emergency Alerts. Subscribe to receive alerts at <http://www.weather.gov/subscribe>.

Be an Example

Once you have taken action share your story with your family and friends. Create a YouTube video, post your story on Facebook, comment on a blog, or send a tweet. Building a Twitter list with local, state or federal agencies and organizations that could provide valuable information when an emergency occurs is a good activity to do before a crisis. Then share your list with family, friends and neighbors. Studies show that many people use social media in the event of a disaster to let relatives and friends know they are safe. This is an important trend because people are most likely to take preparedness steps if they observe the preparations taken by others. Social media provides the perfect platform to demonstrate preparedness actions for others.

More information and ideas on how you can Be a Force of Nature can be found at www.Ready.gov/severe-weather. Information on the different types of severe weather such as tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and flooding is available at www.weather.gov and <http://www.ready.gov/severe-weather>