



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Community Health and the Environment**

*Gil Copley, Director  
(636) 949-7477*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Rod Zerr, Director, Division of Emergency Management    636-949-3023  
Cameron Wessel, Public Information Officer                636-949-7408

### **Severe Weather Season Begins**

A reminder about thunderstorm and tornado safety

**St. Charles County, Missouri** – While spring often means fair skies and warm sunshine in St. Charles County, it can also bring the threat of severe weather. Flooding rains, lightning, large hail, and tornadoes are all a possibility.

To help citizens prepare, the National Weather Service (NWS) in cooperation with the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) will conduct a statewide tornado drill on Tuesday, March 13. At 1:30 that afternoon, the NWS will issue a mock tornado warning. People are encouraged to use this time to review and practice their weather emergency plans.

An important part of any emergency plan is having a kit with basic supplies stored in or near your storm shelter. The kit should include water, canned or dried food, a manual can opener, a flashlight, a battery-powered radio, extra batteries, and a first aid kit. More information about emergency preparedness can be found on the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website at [www.dhss.mo.gov/Ready\\_in\\_3](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/Ready_in_3). The Department of Community Health and the Environment offers presentations on “Ready in 3” and severe weather. Call 636-949-7408 for details.

As St. Charles County enters another severe weather season, now is a good time for a refresher on the purpose of the warning siren system. Rod Zerr, Director of Emergency Management, says, “The sirens are meant to alert people who are outside, and are not designed to be heard indoors. In addition, there is no ‘all clear’ sound: when you hear the sirens, you should take cover.” At present, St. Charles County Government owns 57 outdoor warning sirens.

Zerr adds, “Whenever storms threaten, we encourage people to tune in to local TV or radio stations for the latest information. Even better is a NOAA Weather Radio. They allow users to get alerts directly from the National Weather Service.” NOAA Weather Radios cost about \$30, and are available at many local retailers.

For more information about the Division of Emergency Management, call 636-949-3023 or visit [www.scchealth.org](http://www.scchealth.org) and click on the “Emergency Management” link.

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### **Severe Weather Safety Information**

A **watch** means conditions are favorable for severe thunderstorm or tornado development. Pay close attention to TV and radio, and be prepared to take action at a moment's notice.

A **warning** means a severe thunderstorm or tornado has been spotted. Seek shelter immediately.

- **AT HOME:** Go to the basement or an interior room on the lowest floor. If available, get under a heavy piece of furniture, and protect your head with your arms. Stay away from windows.
- **AT OFFICE OR SCHOOL:** Go to an interior room on the lowest floor of the structure. Stay away from windows. Do not take shelter in a gymnasium, cafeteria, or other large open space, as the roof may collapse.
- **IN A MOBILE HOME:** Leave mobile homes immediately, and take shelter in a nearby building or ditch.
- **IN A VEHICLE:** Stop as soon as possible and take shelter in a nearby building, ditch, or low-lying area away from your vehicle. Overpasses are not safe. Never try to outrun a tornado.

Lightning is a particular danger during a thunderstorm. Each year, dozens of people are killed or injured by lightning. If you can hear thunder, you can be struck. Seek shelter in a nearby building or enclosed vehicle immediately.

Heavy rains often accompany thunderstorms. When this happens, low-lying areas are prone to flash flooding. Never drive through water on the road. If your car stalls, get out immediately and seek higher ground. It takes less than two feet of water to sweep your vehicle away.

Remember, severe thunderstorms can generate a tornado with little warning. Be alert to changing weather conditions, and take cover when skies threaten.

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