



PLAINFIELD EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
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Be Alert and Aware during Severe Storm Season

The Plainfield Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) encourages all Plainfield residents to remain alert and aware during severe storm season. February 27 – March 5, 2011 has been designated as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Illinois. On the average, 41 tornadoes touch down in Illinois each year. In 2010 a series of tornadoes struck the rural communities of Streator and Dwight, resulting in one (1) death.

In Illinois most tornadoes occur from April through June, during the mid afternoon through early evening hours, but they can occur anytime of day and any month of the year. Over 30% of the tornadoes reported in Illinois occurring during the nighttime hours. Tornadoes are the most destructive storms that occur in Illinois and residents can prepare themselves by learning how the weather warning system works, the differences in terminology, and some basic safety information.

When a *WATCH* is issued it means that conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop within the next several hours. Trained weather spotters from the Plainfield Emergency Management Agency and other organizations will position themselves throughout the area to report on any development of severe or potentially severe weather.

When a *WARNING* is issued it means that severe weather (Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado) has either been spotted or indicated by radar approaching the immediate area. If the storm is a tornado/funnel cloud, warning sirens will be activated. This is the indication that everyone should take shelter either below ground, or on the first floor in the interior of the building. Make sure you take your NOAA battery-operated radio with you, so you can get updates on the storm. Do not go outside to look at the storm, and do not call 911 to see why the sirens are activated. The sirens will not sound an all-clear signal. Listen to your radio to find out when the storm has passed.

Remember – weather permitting, the warning sirens are tested on the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m.

WILL COUNTY'S OLDEST COMMUNITY

In the event of a TORNADO or SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING being issued for this immediate area, you should take the following actions;

- In a home, go to the basement and get under the stairwell or heavy piece of furniture. If there is no basement go to an interior closet, hall or bathroom on the lowest floor and stay away from windows.
- In schools, hospitals, churches, and office buildings, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor. Stay away from windows. Avoid large open areas with free span roofs, such as gymnasiums and cafeterias.
- In shopping centers, avoid large open areas and glass. Seek shelter in bathrooms, small interior spaces and behind counters. *Do not attempt to escape in your vehicle.*
- Abandon mobile homes and vehicles for a nearby-reinforced building, as a last resort lie flat in a ditch. Do not seek shelter under and overpass.

Although tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are the most highly publicized severe weather events that people typically prepare for, two other weather events should also be prepared for; lightning and flash flooding.

Lightning

Lightning is the most frequent threat to personal safety during the thunderstorm season. Keep these lightning safety tips in mind;

- Plan ahead and avoid dangerous lightning situations. Check the latest forecast before going outside for extended periods.
- Watch for storms and seek shelter indoors if a storm approaches.
- Lightning often strikes the tallest object. If caught outdoors during a storm, don't stand next to tall trees or power poles, and don't be out in an open area where you may be the tallest object.
- A closed, hard top metal vehicle is safe in a thunderstorm.
- An open structure such as a picnic shelter, gazebo, or baseball dugout will keep you dry but will not protect you from lightning.
- If boating or swimming, get out of the water when a storm approaches and seek shelter indoors.
- Avoid using electrical appliances, telephones, and metal plumbing when indoors during a thunderstorm.

Use the flash bang method for determining the distance of lightning. When you see a flash of lightning, count the seconds until you hear the bang of thunder and divide by 5. The result will be the distance in miles from the lightning flash. If the thunder occurs less than 30 seconds after the flash it is close enough to be dangerous. Stop outdoor activity and get indoors. Stay indoors until 30 minutes after the storm has passed. More information on lightning safety can be found at www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov.

Flash Floods

A flash flood is a rapid rise in creeks and streams, or serious urban flooding, caused by heavy thunderstorm rain that poses a threat to life and property. Flash floods happen quickly, usually within a few hours of the heavy rain that causes them. Floods and flash floods cause more deaths nationwide than any other storm hazard. In Illinois, most flash floods occur in mid to late summer and they often occur at night, however as we recently saw in Plainfield in the months of September and December 2008, floods can occur any time of year. About half of all flash flood related deaths occur in vehicles. Keep these flash flood safety tips in mind;



- Don't drive through flooded roads, especially if the water is moving rapidly. Flooded or washed out roads are especially difficult to see at night. Remember, TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN.
- Don't let children play near storm drains, creeks or flooded areas.
- If you live near a creek or stream, evacuate to higher ground if the water rises rapidly or if a flash flood warning is issued.

Additional information can be found at www.nws.noaa.gov/floodsafety.

Unfortunately, the Plainfield area is no stranger to severe weather. All residents should monitor their televisions, radios or NOAA weather radio for changing weather conditions, and be ready to move to shelter should a severe storm approach. For additional information related to severe weather or emergency preparedness, you can contact Plainfield Emergency Management Agency Director John Konopek at 815-439-4803, or at the Plainfield EMA website at www.plainfieldema.org.

Authority:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Konopek". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John Konopek
Director