

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WILMINGTON NC  
SAT MAR 8 2014

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SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN  
NORTH CAROLINA AND SOUTH CAROLINA  
MARCH 2 - MARCH 8  
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This week has been declared North and South Carolina's Severe Weather Awareness week for 2014. In addition, this week is also NOAA and FEMA's National Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

Today's theme is: *Be a Force of Nature: North Carolina Severe Weather Threats and Safety*

**Severe Thunderstorms:**

- The term severe thunderstorm refers to a thunderstorm producing hail that is at least 1 inch in diameter, wind gusts to 58 mph or greater, a tornado, or any combination of the three.
- The severe thunderstorm season in central North Carolina typically starts in March and does not end until late in the fall. Some of the most damaging storms occur from March through early July.

**Large Hail:**

- The large hail season in the Carolina's typically runs from March through early July, typically peaking in May.
- While hail is not usually life threatening, these large chunks of ice can cause serious damage to roofs, siding, windows, automobiles, and crops.
- To stay safe from large hail, simply move indoors and remain there until the storm passes.

**Damaging Wind:**

- Severe gusts of wind from a thunderstorm called downbursts or straight line winds are a serious danger, and can reach speeds in excess of 100 mph.
- Straight line winds can cause damage that looks similar to and is equivalent to that of a tornado.
- Damaging wind events in the Carolinas typically starts in March and last into September, with a peak in activity from May through early August.
- To stay safe from damaging winds, remember to get inside a sturdy home or business when a warning is issued or if threatening weather approaches. Stay away from windows when storms approach and seek shelter in an interior bathroom or closet when the wind begins to intensify.

**Lightning:**

- Lightning occurs with all thunderstorms and is what defines a thunderstorm.
- In a typical year there are over 500,000 lightning strikes in both North and South Carolina, resulting in around 9 to 12 strikes per square mile.
- During the past 10 years, there have been 12 lightning-related fatalities in the state. Most lightning fatalities occur when people are caught outside working, playing, boating or golfing.
- Lightning can travel up to 15 miles away from a thunderstorm. For that reason, anytime you hear thunder or see lightning, seek shelter indoors, and remain indoors away from windows for at least 30 minutes after the storm ends. If caught outdoors, stay away from trees, telephone poles, and other tall objects. A hard-topped vehicle will offer good protection from lightning. When boating, try to seek safe shelter well before the storm approaches. Remember the phrase “When thunder roars go indoors.”

### **Tornadoes:**

- Tornadoes can occur any month of the year in the Carolina’s. Violent tornadoes with winds in excess of 150 mph have struck the state as early as March and as late as November.
- The worst tornado outbreak in North Carolina history occurred on April 16, 2011, when 30 confirmed tornadoes occurred. A total of 24 individuals lost their lives in North Carolina.
- A large portion of tornado fatalities in North and South Carolina have occurred at night. At night, tornadoes are difficult to see, and even when warnings are provided at night, people asleep are less likely to hear those warnings.
- When a tornado warning is issued for your area or if you spot a tornado, seek shelter in a substantial building. The safest place is in an interior bathroom or closet. Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Stay away from windows as debris picked up by a tornado can easily shatter a window and enter your home.
- If you are caught outdoors, seek shelter in a low spot like a ditch or culvert. You want to get as low as possible to protect yourself from flying debris.
- If in your car and threatened by a tornado, abandon your vehicle and seek shelter in a substantial structure or in a ditch. Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle.

### **Flooding and Flash Flooding:**

- Nationwide, flooding causes more fatalities than any other type of severe weather.
- Flooding across North and South Carolina can result from several different weather situations, such as slow moving thunderstorms repeatedly affecting the same location, or days of steady rain can cause creeks and rivers to flood over large areas. Any thunderstorm moving across metropolitan or urbanized areas can cause flash flooding due to the amount of runoff generated by highly developed areas.
- Rushing water in the form of a flash flood can quickly become deadly. Just a few inches of fast-moving flood water can knock you off of your feet, while just one to two feet of moving water can overtake a car forcing it off the road and possibly washing it away downstream.
- Flooding is dangerous any time of day, but most dangerous at night when it is difficult to see.

- Most flood deaths occur in automobiles. When approaching water flowing over the road, turn around and go the other way. Remember, turn around - don't drown.
- Knowing your area's flood risk at home and work is also very important. Check your homeowner's or renter's insurance. Many policies do not cover flooding and many areas across North Carolina are subject to flooding although not officially declared within a flood plain. Just because flood damage is not in your insurance policy does not mean your house cannot flood.
- Before rain and flood waters threaten, evaluate your flood risk and know where you will go if you need to evacuate. Once a flash flood warning is issued, then it is time to take action.
- When a warning is issued for your area, it means that flooding has been reported or is imminent. This is the time to closely monitor the situation and move quickly if flood waters threaten. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Seek higher ground, and move to a safe location before access is cut off by flood waters. Never allow children to play around high water, creeks, streams, or storm drains.

We hope that you have taken time this week to think about the various types of severe weather that can threaten your home and family. Talk with your family about severe weather and develop a safety plan. Staying informed about severe weather and making sure that you know what to do when severe weather threatens will keep you and your family safe.

Finally, *be a force of nature*, and spread the word to your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers about severe weather planning and safety, and encourage them to do the same. For more information, please visit [ready.gov/severe-weather](http://ready.gov/severe-weather).