

Severe Weather Preparedness Week in North Carolina is March 1-7, 2015
Today's Topic: Make a plan and encourage others to do the same

The first step in making sure that you and your family are prepared for severe weather is pledging to prepare. This includes developing a family emergency and communications plan. In short, know what to do before severe weather strikes by creating an emergency plan today.

Your family may not be together when a disaster strikes, so it is important to plan in advance: how you will get to a safe place; how you will contact one another; how you will get back together; and what you will do in different situations.

The web site ReadyNC.org has made it simple for you to make a family emergency plan. You can download the Family Emergency Plan and fill out the sections before printing it or emailing it to your family and friends.

You should also inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, daycare and school, faith organizations, sports events and commuting. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one. Talk to community leaders, your colleagues, neighbors and members of faith or civic organizations about how you can work together in the event of an emergency. You will be better prepared to safely reunite your family and loved ones during an emergency if you think ahead and communicate with others in advance.

Planning for severe weather also includes...

- Ensure that you and your family members know about your surroundings and severe weather risks specific to your area.
- Have an emergency plan in place, and know what to do before severe weather strikes. Visit readync.org for more on family preparedness and to download a copy of the Family Emergency Plan.
- Stay informed by having multiple sources for weather alerts.
- Exercise the plan with your family and post it in your home where visitors can see it.
- As part of tailoring your plans, consider working with others to create networks of neighbors, relatives, friends and co-workers who will assist each other in an emergency. Discuss your needs and responsibilities and how people in the network can assist each other with communication, care of children, pets, specific needs like the operation of durable medical equipment or how we can inform someone with a hearing loss about impending severe weather .
- Identify an appropriate shelter in your home, neighborhood and community ahead of time. Share this with your neighbors.
- Learn how to strengthen your home and business against severe weather. Pass this on at a community gathering, local service organizations or faith-based meeting.
- Find out from local government emergency management how you will be notified for each kind of disaster, and sign up for additional alerts through social media and local news. Understand these local warning systems and signals, and share your knowledge with your coworkers and friends. Email these resources to your friends, or post them to your social media account.

History teaches that a lack of awareness and preparation are common threads among all major weather disasters. Knowing your vulnerability and what actions you should take can save your life and others. During this preparedness week, we ask you to be a force of nature – Know your risk, take action and be an example by sharing what you have done to prepare, with your friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers, and encourage them to do the same.

You can learn more about severe weather safety by visiting the North Carolina Department of Public Safety preparedness website at readync.org. This web page features an abundance of information, and links to a free cell phone app, that will help you plan and prepare for the severe weather season. Once again, that's readync.org.