



NEWS RELEASE

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

10501 Trade Court, Richmond, VA 23236 • (804) 897-6510 • www.vaemergency.gov

CONTACT: Bob Spieldenner
(804) 897-6510 or 674-2400
bob.spieldenner@vdem.virginia.gov

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Governor proclaims March 12 as Tornado Preparedness Day

Citizens can participate in statewide tornado drill

RICHMOND, Va. – During the past two years, 62 tornadoes struck Virginia, killing 10 people and injuring more than 100. To encourage tornado awareness and safety, Gov. Bob McDonnell has proclaimed March 12 as Tornado Preparedness Day.

“Tragically, many Virginia families and communities have been affected by deadly tornadoes in recent years, and recovery continues in many places,” said Michael Cline, state coordinator for the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. “Knowing what to do when a tornado warning is issued can save your life, so we encourage everyone to participate in the upcoming Statewide Tornado Drill.”

On March 12, businesses and organizations, schools and colleges, and families and individuals are encouraged to practice taking cover from tornadoes during the Statewide Tornado Drill, set for 9:45 a.m. At that time, the National Weather Service will send a test tornado warning that will trigger a tone alert and broadcast message on NOAA Weather Radio. The message will be picked up by TV and radio broadcasters, simulating what listeners will hear during an actual tornado warning.

When the test tornado warning is sounded, people should move as quickly as possible to a safe area in a sturdy building. Safe areas are basements, interior rooms, bathrooms, closets or hallways on the lowest level of a building. In choosing a safe area, stay away from windows. Once in the safe area, crouch down or sit on the floor, facing down, and cover heads with hands.

“The best and fastest way for anyone to get a tornado warning is by NOAA Weather Radio,” said Bill Sammler, NWS warning coordination meteorologist. “With a weather radio, you get weather data directly from the nearest National Weather Service office. When we issue a tornado warning, the weather radio sounds an alarm or flashes lights and then gives information on where the storm is, which way it’s moving, and telling people in its path to take cover. This radio could be a lifesaver.”

NOAA Weather Radios with SAME alerts are available at electronics and sporting goods stores, discount and department stores, and online. They come in battery-powered models, and many also have AM/FM bands. A special needs NOAA Weather Radio is available as well. The [special-needs NOAA Weather Radio](#) can warn deaf and hard-of-hearing persons of hazardous conditions, giving them around-the-clock, up-to-the-minute weather information.

For help in conducting a tornado drill and to register for the statewide drill, go to www.ReadyVirginia.gov. Although registration is not required, people participating in the statewide drill are encouraged to sign up to show their support. The annual drill is a joint effort of VDEM and NWS.

View the Governor's proclamation for Tornado Preparedness Day: <http://www.vaemergency.gov/ready-virginia/stay-informed/tornado/gov-tornado-proclamation>

Here's a look back at tornadoes in Virginia during 2012:

- 11 tornadoes were recorded (8 EFO and 3 EF1).
- There were no deaths, but six people were injured.
- Property damage totaled \$3 million.
- The highest number of tornados occurred in June (6).

During 2011:

- 51 tornadoes hit, the second highest number on record (87 struck in 2004).
- In April, 10 people died and more than 100 were injured.
- Most tornadoes occurred during April, but tornadoes also were recorded in March, May, August, September, October and November.
- In April, 212 homes and 17 businesses were destroyed; more than 1,050 homes and businesses were damaged.
- Nearly every part of Virginia experienced tornadoes, including mountain areas.
- One-third of the tornadoes struck at night when people were asleep.

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