



# NEWS

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## SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK

### **Subject: “Be Safe at School, at Work, and at Home”**

(Jackson) – While it is possible to see the fury of a hurricane as it moves up the coast, the full wrath of a tornado can be unleashed right next to you in a matter of minutes. A suddenly darkening sky on a spring afternoon can be one of the first indicators of impending trouble. When a swirling funnel forms and dips to the ground, property will be destroyed and lives may be lost; but that outcome can be changed. Being prepared for tornadoes means being able to reduce the chances of death or injury.

February 17-21, 2003 is Severe Weather Awareness Week in Mississippi, with a statewide tornado drill scheduled for the morning of February 19. This year’s theme is **“Be Safe at School, at Work and at Home.”**

“Mississippi communities from Pontotoc to Madison and Columbus to Lucedale have suffered the devastation that can result when severe weather strikes,” said Governor Musgrove. “We all must learn from their experience. In order to be safe, we must be alert and ready for action.”

“Statistics have shown that being prepared for an event can save lives and reduce injuries and property losses,” said Robert Latham, director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. “Because tornadoes can strike with little or no warning, people have to know instinctively what to do for their own safety.”

As part of Severe Weather Awareness Week, schools, government agencies and businesses across the state are encouraged to take part in the annual tornado drill on Wednesday morning, February 19. In case of actual severe weather on February 19, the drill will be held on Thursday, February 20. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service (NWS) sponsor the awareness week in Mississippi.

Emergency Management experts and meteorologists say the first step in protecting yourself from severe weather is to listen for weather watches and warnings. These are issued by the National Weather Service and are broadcast by local radio and TV stations. A **WATCH** means weather conditions are favorable for the development of a particular weather event, such as tornadoes, severe, violent thunderstorms, hail, or high winds. A **WARNING** means that particular type of weather event is occurring and you should take immediate protective action.

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MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
MISSISSIPPI OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY



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Severe weather most often occurs when two weather systems collide in the spring and summer months. Weather systems that are only a few degrees different in temperature, or a few millibars different in pressure, can result in violent winds, hail, thunderstorms and even tornadoes.

Here are some tips for what to do **before** severe weather strikes and warnings are issued: Develop an emergency plan for you and your family; Prepare a disaster supplies kit; Have regular drills to practice your emergency plan; Know your location in relationship to the movement of storms; Have a NOAA Weather Radio with battery back up.

When a **Tornado WATCH** is issued, you should stay tuned to a local radio or television station or listen to NOAA Weather Radio; secure any loose objects outdoors or move them inside; survey your immediate surroundings for the most suitable shelter; and be alert for changing weather conditions.

If a **Tornado WARNING** is issued, or you have an indication that a tornado may be approaching, **TAKE COVER IMMEDIATELY**. The safest place in a home is on the lowest level of the home, in an interior room away from windows and outside walls. This may be a bathroom, interior closet or under a stairway. People in tall buildings should take shelter in interior hallways, away from windows. Stay away from vehicles. Do not try to out-run a tornado. Leave your mobile home and seek shelter in a sturdy building.

Emergency Management officials urge people not to wait until a severe storm **watch** or **warning** is issued before assembling their emergency supplies kit. The kit should be kept in a portable container, such as a plastic crate, duffel bag or backpack, and stored in an interior closet, basement, or other accessible safe place.

Always keep a basic emergency supplies kit on hand. The kit should include: Water, about one gallon per person per day; canned food for the family to last three days; hand operated can opener; Special foods and supplies for infants and elderly; Battery powered radio and extra fresh batteries; Flashlight and extra batteries; First aid kit; Necessary prescription drugs; Copies of important papers (insurance policies, deeds, etc.).

“We know from experience that individual and family preparedness saves lives,” said Robert Latham. “Knowing when to act and what to do will save lives and property.”

Visit our web site for more Severe Weather Awareness Week information at [www.msema.org](http://www.msema.org).

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*“Disaster Preparedness Saves Lives and Property”*  
Visit us online at [www.msema.org](http://www.msema.org)