

2014 Severe Weather Awareness Week for Nebraska

Today is Wednesday and marks the third day of Severe Weather Awareness Week for the state of Nebraska, which continues through Friday, March 28th.

Severe Weather Awareness Week provides the National Weather Service an opportunity to test communication systems and to get potentially lifesaving information out to the public. Now is the time for people to review their safety plans and be prepared for severe weather season.

The topic for today is tornadoes.

There were 49 tornadoes reported across Nebraska in 2013, which are 5 below the 30 year average of 54 tornadoes. There were 17 injuries and no deaths reported. The first tornado of the year touched down on March 19th near Shelton in Buffalo County, and the last tornado of the year touched down on October 4th, in Dakota County near Willis. The busiest month of the year for tornadoes was May, with 23 tornadoes, and the busiest day of the year was May 29th, with 10 tornadoes confirmed.

Remember that if a tornado warning is issued, or you see a tornado approaching, you need to seek shelter immediately. Tornadoes can sometimes strike with little or no warning, so it is important not to waste time when seeking shelter.

When taking cover, a basement or underground shelter is your best option. If possible, get under something sturdy like a table or work bench. If an underground shelter is not available, take cover near the center of the house on the lowest floor, in a closet or a bathroom. Stay away from windows. Cover up with blankets or pillows to protect yourself from flying debris.

If inside a vehicle, mobile home, or in open country, leave immediately and get to the nearest reinforced shelter. If none is available, lie flat in the nearest ditch or other low lying area and cover your head with your arms.

When inside schools, malls, hospitals, or other public buildings, move quickly to the designated shelter. Always stay indoors, and go to interior hallways or small rooms on the lowest floor possible for protection. Stay away from windows. Do not stay in large rooms such as auditoriums or gymnasiums, as rooms with large free span roofs are vulnerable to tornadic winds.

Anytime the threat for severe weather exists, stay updated on the latest weather information by going to the National Weather Service Website, <http://www.weather.gov>, or by tuning in to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, or your local television and radio station. Make sure to watch for signs for approaching storms, such as darkening skies, increasing winds, flashes of lightning, and thunder.

More information about Severe Weather Awareness Week can be found at: <http://www.weather.gov/northplatte>.