

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
Wednesday, March 21st, 2012

...2012 Severe Weather Awareness Week for Nebraska...

Today marks the third day of Severe Weather Awareness Week for the state of Nebraska, which continues through Friday, March 23rd.

Severe Weather Awareness Week provides the National Weather Service with 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 55 tornadoes reported across Nebraska in 2011, which is 3 above the 30 year average of 52 tornadoes. There was one injury but no deaths reported. The first tornado of the year touched down on March 22nd in Burt County near Craig, and the last tornado of the year touched down on August 29th in Dawes County near Chadron. The busiest month of the year for tornadoes was June, with 25 tornadoes, and the busiest day of the year was June 20th, with 14 tornadoes reported.

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 you are outside and can drive away from the tornado, do so. On average, tornadoes move at 35 - 45 MPH, so driving away would be the first course of action. If you can't drive away from the tornado, as would be the case if you were driving directly toward the tornado on a divided highway or were stuck in slow moving traffic, abandon your vehicle and seek shelter in a nearby structure, such as a house or other well built structure. If no buildings are available and driving away is not an option: Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible. If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands. NEVER seek shelter under a bridge or overpass.

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/omaha>