

Overview of the New Quad City Metro Siren Guidelines



- Under the Quad City Metro Area outdoor warning system guidelines, sirens are sounded for:
- tornadoes,
 - thunderstorms with winds 70 mph or greater (potential for whole trees to snap or uproot), or
 - golf ball sized hail or larger (potential for windows to break).
- The same tone will be used for all weather-related threats in each community.
 - Sirens may be sounded multiple times to convey a continued threat.
 - There is no all-clear signal from sirens. (People should be indoors and monitoring local media for updates on the storm.)
 - Sirens are tested on the first Tuesday of each month.

Purpose of Sirens

Sirens are only one part of an overall warning system that includes preparation, NOAA Weather Radio, and local media partners. Sirens are an outdoor warning system designed only to alert those who are outside that something dangerous is approaching. When the sirens are heard, people should go inside and tune into local media to get more information.

Indoor Alerts

For alerts indoors, every home and business should have a NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards. Weather Radio is like a smoke detector for severe weather - designed to wake and alert people when a warning is issued for their area so appropriate action can be taken.



Background on the Guidelines

Why the Common Guidelines are Important

When life-threatening weather is approaching, minutes or even seconds could make a difference. If people are unsure or confused about an alert, they may not respond quickly or appropriately. By adopting common outdoor warning system guidelines, confusion can be prevented, response time is reduced, and lives will be saved.

How the Guidelines Were Developed

Emergency management officials from Scott County, Rock Island County, and the Rock Island Arsenal developed the guidelines together in cooperation with the National Weather Service. Input on the draft guidelines was also sought from dispatch centers across the metro area. During the spring of 2009, the final guideline recommendations were then shared with community governments.

Communities throughout the Quad Cities expressed strong support for a unified outdoor warning system policy. Within a few months of distribution, the guidelines were formally adopted by the Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island County, and Scott County, as well as the cities of Moline, East Moline, Rock Island, Davenport, and Bettendorf. Many smaller communities in the Quad Cities commuting area have also adopted the guidelines.

The adoption of a common outdoor warning siren policy is somewhat unique among metro areas, considering unanimous agreement from two counties and five cities spanning two states and a Federal site (Rock Island Arsenal). It shows the commitment of local officials to the safety of the community and improvement of the alert process.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why will the outdoor warning sirens be sounded for hail and wind?

When thunderstorm winds exceed 70 mph, trees can be uprooted or snapped. Hail that is golf ball sized or larger can break windows. Both of these things pose a direct and immediate risk to life if people are caught outdoors.

How often can I expect the sirens to sound for severe weather?

On average, the Quad City area experiences 5 storms each year that meet the siren guidelines.

Has my community adopted the guidelines?

Check with your local city government to find out if your community has adopted the guidelines.

Why can't I hear the sirens in my house?

Sirens are an outdoor warning system designed only to alert those who are outside that something dangerous is approaching.

How can I get alerts when I'm at work or in my house?

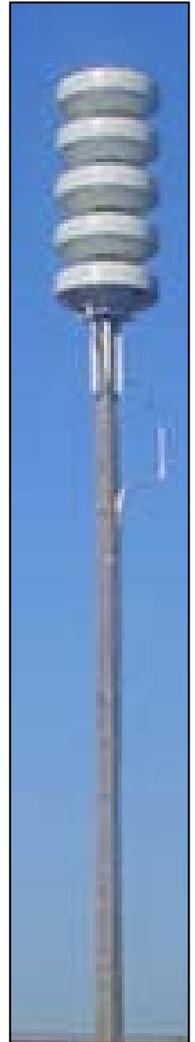
For alerts indoors, every home and business should have a NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards., which acts like a smoke detector for severe weather to alert you when a warning is issued so you can take appropriate action.

Will the sirens warn me of every dangerous storm?

Short answer: No. Every situation is different, and nothing can replace common sense. If a storm is approaching, the lightning alone is a threat. Winds significantly lower than 70 mph may down branches or overturn tents, leading to potential for injury. Sirens are only one part of a warning system that includes awareness, preparation, NOAA Weather Radio, and local media.

Who activates the sirens?

Sirens are typically activated by city or county officials, usually a police or fire department or emergency management personnel. Check with your city or county officials to learn more.



The Bottom Line

*When outdoor warning sirens are heard,
go indoors and tune into local media to get more information.*

On the web:

- Quad City Metro Siren Guidelines Background and Details www.weather.gov/quadcities/?n=sirenqcmetro
- National Weather Service Quad Cities www.weather.gov/quadcities
- Rock Island Arsenal..... www.ria.army.mil/sites/riapo
- Rock Island County Emergency Management www.co.rock-island.il.us/EMA.aspx?id=114
- Scott County Emergency Management www.scottcountyiowa.com/ema
- Red Cross Preparedness www.redcross.org
- NOAA Weather Radio..... www.weather.gov/nwr
- EF Scale for Evaluating Tornado Damage www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/ef-scale.html