

For Immediate Release

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GOV. BESHEAR DECLARES MARCH SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS MONTH

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 21, 2013) – Severe weather remains the biggest and most common threat Kentuckians face on a daily basis, according to the Kentucky Department of Emergency Management.

Last year's strong storms and tornadoes that ravaged the Commonwealth Feb. 29 and March 2 are a reminder of how severe weather can impact Kentucky. Those storms left 25 dead, hundreds homeless and thousands of homes damaged.

In an effort to raise awareness and preparation, Gov. Steve Beshear has signed a proclamation declaring March 2013 as Severe Weather Awareness Month.

“The last five years, my administration has faced extreme weather conditions ranging from droughts to floods to ice storms to tornadoes,” Gov. Beshear said. “In each of those instances, Kentuckians have experienced the hardships bad weather can bring. Preparation and awareness are key elements to battling these conditions. I ask every household to be ready to face these challenges.”

John Heltzel, director of Kentucky Emergency Management, said, “Last spring's outbreak of severe weather and tornadoes that swept through Kentucky and neighboring states could have been much worse. We lost 25 Kentuckians to the tornadoes of March 2, but we realize the death toll could have been much higher.

“Given the circumstances of tornadoes sweeping through two days before, people were on heightened alert. That is why preparedness starts at home. It starts with being aware of conditions and situations that threaten you and your family's safety and then taking appropriate steps to protect yourself,” he said.

The 2012 spring tornadoes caused damage across Kentucky, destroying much of downtown West Liberty in Morgan County and severe damages in multiple Kentucky counties. Storm damage included:

- 4,529 damaged homes
- 671 destroyed homes
- \$8.3 million expended to date for housing assistance
- \$2 million for other needs assistance (2,360 applicants)
- \$11.6 million in SBA Home Loans
- \$500,000 in SBA Business Loans
- \$16.8 million obligated by FEMA to date for government repair/replace projects

One year later, the towns of West Liberty, Salyersville, London and communities statewide continue to clean up and rebuild. Gov. Beshear, Congressman Hal Rogers and federal, state and local officials recently announced \$29.3 million in funding to help Morgan County rebuild from the disastrous storm and tornado damage suffered in March 2012.

Morgan County Judge-Executive Tim Conley said, “It has been a heroic effort on everyone's part, from

the initial warnings, the response and throughout the on-going recovery. Let me assure you, when the weather forecast is threatening and skies turn cloudy, folks around here will be aware and be prepared.”

Heltzel said every household should be prepared to face these challenges at any given time. In the event of a power outage something as simple as having a flashlight, radio and extra batteries available can make a difference in your safety.

The Kentucky Emergency Management encourages Kentuckians to have an emergency kit, an emergency plan, weather alert radios and take immediate action if outdoor warning sirens sound.

“Remember outdoor warning sirens are not intended to alert people indoors,” Heltzel said.

As a part of Severe Weather Awareness Month, Tuesday, March 5 at approximately 10:07 a.m. EST, the National Weather Service (NWS), partnering with Emergency Management and Kentucky Broadcasters Association (KBA), will conduct a tornado test message that will activate NOAA Weather Radios and broadcast media. Schools, businesses, government agencies and citizens across the Commonwealth are encouraged to participate in the annual Statewide Tornado Safety Drill.

A survey will be available online, allowing Emergency Management and other officials to measure and improve preparedness for such occasions. The survey, the Governor’s proclamation, items for an emergency kit and plan, additional weather information and important links are available at <http://kyem.ky.gov/StatewideTornadoSafetyDrill/Pages/default.aspx>.

Severe Weather - Staying Safe

Emergency Management and Kentucky Educational Television will host a panel of weather experts on a call in show, “Severe Weather - Staying Safe” Monday Feb. 25 at 10 p.m. Eastern Time. This year’s panel consists of Emergency Management Director John Heltzel; NWS Louisville Office John Gordon; Midland Radio Corporation National Spokesman Bruce Thomas; and Meteorologist T.G. Shuck.

The show’s host, Bill Goodman, will take viewer’s calls, as well as questions via Twitter, @KET using the hash tag #kyweather, and present them to the panel for discussion.

Midland Radio Corporation has donated five NOAA Weather Alert Radios to be given away at the end of the show from viewers who submitted questions to the panel. More information and a schedule of the program viewing is available at <http://www.ket.org/tvschedules/series.php?id=KSEVS> .

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