

For Immediate Release 7-17-07

Wayne Holmes Emergency Services Coalition
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Are you prepared for a local disaster?

Have you been surprised in the last few years how many times our local communities of Wayne and Holmes Counties have had damage due to tornado like winds or ice storms? Were you prepared to deal with this situation? The Wayne-Holmes Emergency Coalition, made up of organizations representing Emergency Management, Fire and Law enforcement, Hospitals, Colleges, Health Departments, the Mental Health & Recovery Board, United Way, Red Cross and more wants to make sure you are ready the next time disaster strikes.

The Coalition will be having a regular information column about how to prepare for a disaster large or small. We will spotlight topics, as well as answer questions. Your safety and the safety of the whole community relies on how well prepared we all are to respond once a disaster occurs. We hope you find the information helpful. Today's topic: Tornadoes.

Q: What are the most likely disasters that would affect our area?

A: Tornadoes, floods, power outages, and single family house fires.

Q: What is the difference between a tornado watch or warning?

A: A watch means conditions are right for a tornado to form. A warning means a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.

Q: How much time do I have to prepare if I see on the TV radar that a storm or a tornado is approaching?

A: With modern Doppler radar, a storm's movement can be tracked, and the TV weather staff can tell you how fast it is moving toward you. In the case of a tornado, they can form quickly, and you may not have much notice at all. So if you see on TV that conditions may spawn a tornado near you, it is better to get to your safe location with your supplies and ride out the storm. Most storms are fast moving and will pass by within 15 minutes. So it's a small price to pay to inconvenience yourself and go to the basement when it may save your life.

Q: My family members tend to want to go outside and watch for the tornado so they can say they have seen it. What can I do to prevent this?

A: Have them read this column and have them talk to a tornado survivor. People who have been through these events will tell you honestly that you are foolish to not heed the warnings.

Q: What should be in my Disaster Kit?

A: The American Red Cross suggests these items for a Disaster Kit: a supply of water, (one gallon per person per day), non-perishable food, non-electric can opener, change of clothing, sturdy shoes, first aid kit, prescription medications, extra pair of glasses, battery powered flashlight, radio and extra batteries, credit cards or cash, list of family physicians, extra set of car keys, special items for children, elderly or the disabled, recent photos of family members. Take your cell phone with you too.

Q: Should I have a home evacuation or safe location plan during a tornado?

A: Yes, everyone in your home should know exactly where they are to go should a tornado strike. You should have family drills or household drills. Mobile homes are not safe in a tornado. If in a home with no basement, you will need to get to an interior room. If you don't feel safe at home develop an alternative place for evacuation. No matter where you go for protection, have a communication plan so people know where to find you, and practice going there enough so that you can do it quickly.

Q: What about a tornado striking while I am at work? How can I prepare?

A: Know your workplace tornado or safety plans, and practice these as well. Find out where the office disaster or safety kit is located. Whether your business is large or small, know what your role would be in a disaster. Who is allowed to shut off water, electric or gas? Who can operate the fire extinguisher? Who may have special medical needs in your office? How will you reach your family members from work?

Above all stay calm, do not panic, listen carefully and follow your plan or directions.

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