

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Racine County Emergency Management Debunks Common Tornado Myths

(RACINE) There are many different myths associated with tornadoes and the biggest one in Racine County is that Lake Michigan protects Racine from tornadoes. This is simply not true. Racine County has had 26 tornadoes since 1844 and the May 18th, 1883 tornado which hit the north side of the City of Racine, just blocks from Lake Michigan, is still listed as one of Wisconsin's Top Ten Killer Tornadoes in Wisconsin history.

"I think most every community has some sort of reason why tornadoes don't hit them," commented David Maack, Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator, "Most people have never seen a tornado but that does not mean that they are not a threat."

Other myths include:

- **Seeking shelter under an overpass is safe.** An overpass can act as a wind tunnel and flying debris is a huge concern. If you can safely drive away from the tornado, do so. Otherwise seek shelter in a building. If that isn't possible, get out of the car and seek shelter in a low-lying ditch. Make sure to cover your head.
- **You can outrun a tornado in a vehicle.** Tornadoes can move at up to 70 mph or more and shift directions erratically and without warning. It is unwise to try to outrun a tornado. It is better to abandon your vehicle and seek shelter immediately.
- **Opening windows to equalize pressure.** Most damage from a tornado is from strong winds and debris hitting a home, not low atmospheric pressure. Your time is better spent seeking shelter on the lowest level possible. If you don't have a basement, go to an interior room, hallway or closet.
- **The best place to be during a tornado is the southwest corner of your basement.** It's an old wives' tale that the southwest corner of the basement is the safest. The truth is, no one



part of your basement is any safer than another. The most important thing to remember is to stay as far away from outside walls and windows.

- **All tornadoes are visible as they approach.** A tornado is a violently rotating column of air. Often you will see dirt and debris being kicked up at the base of the tornado before you will see that visible tornado shape. A good indicator of a tornado is a loud roar, similar to a train.

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