



READY RACINE

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Racine County
Office
of
Emergency Management

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Mission

To assist
the community
in mitigating
known hazards and
in preparing for,
responding to,
surviving and
recovering from
both natural and
man-made
disasters.

BE PREPARED FOR SEVERE WEATHER

Did you know that the tornado which hit the City of Racine on May 18th, 1883 is still listed as one of Wisconsin’s Top 10 Killer Tornadoes? Or that Racine County has seen 26 tornadoes since 1888? And that Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes annually?

Last year, the National Weather Service (NWS) confirmed that 20 tornadoes touched down in the state of Wisconsin. While Racine County had several tornado warnings issued, no actual tornadoes touched down in the county. However, a derecho on August 10th did cause damage around the county.

While the focus is often upon tornadoes, severe weather also includes thunderstorms and related issues such as high winds, hail, lightning and flooding, all of which can cause damage and even death.

Although extreme heat is the number one weather related killer in the United States, between 1983 and 2012, the Top 4 weather related killers in order were:

- #1- Flooding
- #2- Tornadoes
- #3- Lightning
- #4- Hurricanes

The point is, all severe weather can be dangerous. “Racine County is not immune from severe weather,” commented David Maack, Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator, “Therefore, we need to be prepared and we need to take warnings seriously.”

Advanced warning saves lives but do people act on that warning? In Joplin,

MO the answer was no. People needed between two and nine warnings to take action and seek shelter.

What can you do? Listen, Act and Live! during Tornado Season.

Listen: When severe weather is possible (Thunderstorm or Tornado Watch issued), pick a credible source of information and keep in touch with that source until the danger has passed. One of the best tools is a NOAA Weather Radio (also know as an Emergency Weather Radio).

Act: When you hear a tornado warning (tornado seen by spotters or detected on radar) seek the best shelter you can find immediately. Don’t waste time checking multiple sources of information. You may have only seconds to find a safe place.

Live: Your chances of survival multiply when you listen and act. Hopefully the storm will pass with no damage. But don’t risk your life on a hope.

WEATHER WATCHES AND WARNINGS

A **WEATHER WATCH** is issued by the National Weather Service when the weather conditions are such that a severe storm is likely to develop. This is the time to locate a safe place in the home and tell family members to watch the sky and listen to the radio or television for more information.

A **WEATHER WARNING** is issued when a severe storm has been sighted or detected by weather radar. At this point, the danger is very serious and everyone should go to a safe place, turn on a battery-operated radio or television, and

SEVERE WEATHER CONT.

wait for the "all clear" by the authorities.

FLOODING

Flooding is the most common natural disaster in the United States, causing billions of dollars in damage each year. Anyone who has experienced flooding knows how damaging flood waters can be. And floods are not just isolated to river flooding, heavy rain can bring dangerous flash floods.

Flooding in 2017 along the Fox River in Burlington cost residents, businesses and the community millions of dollars in damage, lost wages and production. Many did not have adequate insurance coverage, including flood insurance.

Being adequately insured will go a long way in recovering from a flood. Just an inch of water in a home can cause thousands of dollars in damage, which many homeowners and renters insurance policies will not cover. Purchase or renew a flood insurance policy. In addition, look at getting a rider to cover water and sewer back up.

Keep important documents in a waterproof container. And create password-protected digital copies. Move



valuables to higher levels and consider raising up appliances, water heaters and furnaces. Remove debris from drains and gutters. Install check valves and consider a sump pump with a battery.

Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. Turn Around. Don't Drown! Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock over an adult, while 12 inches can carry away a small car.

Remember that driving into floodwaters puts your life and the lives of first responders at risk. More than half of flood fatalities are vehicle related.

Every household and business should take the following steps to prepare for severe weather:

- Get a NOAA Weather Radio. Weather radios broadcast official National Weather Service warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. When watches and warnings are issued, an alarm goes off.
- Do not rely solely on outdoor warning sirens. Outdoor warning sirens are not designed to be heard indoors and not every community has them.
- Sign up for email and cell phone



May 18, 1883 Tornado hit the near northside of the city of Racine

text weather alerts. The Weather Channel is just one of many who offer this free service. In addition, there are several apps that you can get that offer weather watches and warnings.

- Get a Kit. When preparing for a possible emergency, it's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.
- Have a plan. Designate shelter areas in the home and workplace. The safest place is generally the basement. If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
- Practice tornado drills at home and work.

HAZMAT AWARENESS

Facilities that use, store or produce certain chemicals are required to file a chemical inventory report with the local fire department, the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and the State Emergency Response Commission by March 1st of each year.

Chemicals are either classified as reportable and/or extremely hazardous. If a facility has one or more chemicals deemed an extremely hazardous substance, the LEPC develops an off site plan for that facility which calculates a "Vulnerability" zone around the facility based on a chemical plume modeling program called CAMEO.

In Racine County, there are 69 planning facilities and 164 reporting facilities. There are also two hazardous materials teams that may respond to

chemical incidents. The Racine Fire Department's Hazmat Team serves as a state regional team, responding to higher level spills and releases. The South Shore Fire Department's Hazmat Team serves as the designated county team, responding throughout Racine County.

Chemicals are used in our homes, businesses, schools and recreational facilities. When safely stored and used, they make our life easier. However, accidents do happen, and some chemicals can cause harm and even death. Therefore, you need to know what to do.

If there is danger of fire or explosion get out immediately. Stay upwind and away from the building to avoid breathing toxic fumes. If you have come in contact with the chemical, use copious amount of water to flush

the chemical off your skin.

If you are instructed to remain in your home or office building, you should:

- Close doors and windows and turn off all ventilation, including furnaces, air conditioners, vents and fans.
- Seek shelter in an internal room with your disaster supplies kit.
- Seal the room with duct tape and plastic sheeting.
- Listen to the radio or television for instructions from authorities.



ODDS AND ENDS

RCOEM TRAINS SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Racine County Office of Emergency Management (RCOEM) recently conducted ICS 300 – Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents training for the Racine County Sheriff's Office Incident Management Team.

Jay Kerner, Deputy EM Coordinator and a WEM instructor, conducted the training, along with Capt. Jim Weidner. The goal was to equip the team with the tools needed to plan and respond to both planned and spontaneous events that could occur, like festivals, civil unrest and natural disasters.

TORNADO TABLETOP CONDUCTED
To cap off Tornado Awareness Week, RCOEM held a countywide virtual

tabletop exercise on April 16th. Over 15 county departments participated in this severe weather tabletop exercise that tested the response and recovery efforts to a devastating tornado traveling across the county from Burlington to the lakefront of Racine. Feedback was positive and will be incorporated into the After Action Review.

ANNUAL REPORT

Our 2020 Annual Report is now online. Highlights include an overview on our COVID response, along with overviews on other emergency management related activities. To access the report, go to: <https://www.racinecounty.com/departments/ready-racine-county/news-events>



CBS58 BROADCASTS FROM EOC

Michael Schlesinger, CBS58 Meteorologist, was broadcasting live from the Racine County Emergency Operations Center on the last day of Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week. David Maack, EM Coordinator, and Michael Schlesinger tagged team, providing severe weather safety tips to viewers.

RACINE COUNTY OPENS UP VACCINATION CLINIC

Prior to the Vaccination Clinic opening up at Regency Mall, Racine County was asked to assist in identifying a facility that was suitable to function as a clinic. It needed to be large enough to handle at least 1000 people a day, as well as have adequate parking.

Emergency Management staff previously looked at vacant storefronts at Regency Mall, anticipating the need for a larger vaccination clinics. When the Wisconsin Department of Health Services notified county officials that Racine County would be hosting one of the regional clinics, emergency management staff began working with local public health agencies on plan to convert the former Burling-

ton Coat Factory into a vaccination clinic.

RCOEM assisted with the logistics of getting the facility “turn key” ready for the state to move in. Staff also assisted in developing an emergency response plan for the facility, as well as training clinic staff on that plan.

The clinic is located at Regency Mall in the old Burlington Coat Factory location. People are asked to go through the mall entrances and enter the clinic from the inside. The clinic is open Tuesdays - Saturdays, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. and walk-ins are welcome. However, if people want to register prior to going to Regency Mall, go to WI Vaccine Registry at

<https://vaccinate.wi.gov>.

Employers and community organizations have the opportunity to reserve blocks of time for staff, membership and their families to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. If interested, contact the Central Racine County Health Department (262-898-4460) or City of Racine Public Health Department (262-636-9201) for more details.



RACINE COUNTY RECERTIFIED AS A STORMREADY COUNTY

The National Weather Service has recertified Racine County as a *StormReady* community. In Wisconsin, 10 Counties, 13 Communities, 1 Government entity and 3 Universities have attained *StormReady* status.

StormReady is a preparedness program to help communities develop plans to handle all types of extreme weather. To become *StormReady*, Racine County has in place a 24-hour warning point and Emergency Oper-

ations Center, has implemented multiple ways to receive notifications and alert the public of severe weather warnings and forecasts, uses a system that monitors weather conditions locally, and promotes the importance of public readiness through community seminars.

Racine County was first designated as a *StormReady* community on November 23, 2005. *StormReady* designation requires that recipients recer-

tify every three years to maintain the designation. For additional information on *StormReady*, visit <https://www.weather.gov/stormready/>.



STAY INFORMED

There are a number of ways in which you can stay informed and involved with Racine County Emergency Management. In addition to our quarterly Ready Racine newsletters, you can learn more about RCOEM by:

- Visiting our website: <http://readyracineco.com>
- Visiting our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/readyracineco
- Submitting your questions and concerns to rcemergencymanagement@racinecounty.com
- Volunteering with Racine County Emergency Management