

Severe Weather Safety Tips

by the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management

No section of the United States is immune from severe weather. That, of course, is not news to residents of Northern Ohio. Since 2012 Cuyahoga County has experienced the remnants of a deadly hurricane, a tornado, Arctic cold, flooding, and heat emergencies.

To encourage Americans to prepare for weather emergencies, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have designated the week of March 2 through March 8, 2014, as National Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

If a weather disaster strikes, safety forces may not be able to assist you for hours or even days. Taking some simple steps now can help you and your family make it through the immediate aftermath of a severe weather event.

Becoming informed is one of the first things you should do. Try to learn as much as you can about severe weather and how you might be able to respond. Good plans are based on good information, and when people understand the situation they usually respond in appropriate ways.

A great way to receive up-to-the-minute weather warnings and updates is to purchase a NOAA weather radio. Get one with a tone alarm that can alert you when severe weather warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS).

Take some time to learn how to protect yourself from deadly weather. Lots of organizations provide weather safety tips on their web sites, including the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management www.ready.cuyahogacounty.us ; FEMA www.ready.gov ; and the American Red Cross www.redcross.org .

The right information can keep you safe in the worst weather. For instance, information from previous storms can help you decide where and how to take shelter.

During the Joplin, MO tornado of 2011, 161 persons were killed. Of those deaths, 84 percent were caused by building failures. But no one who took shelter in a basement or other underground structure was killed, even when the house above them was completely destroyed.

Putting together a disaster supply kit is another recommended activity. Your kit should contain essential items like non-perishable food, water, extra flashlights and batteries, first aid supplies, duct tape, blankets, plastic sheeting or bags, and a battery-powered or

hand-crank radio. Complete lists of suggested items can be found on emergency management web sites.

Finally, make plans for communicating with all family members, as you might not be together when a disaster strikes. Also, have a plan for where you will go if you have to evacuate your home or neighborhood.

For more information on severe weather safety, visit the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management's web site at www.cuyahogacounty.us or contact the Office of Emergency Management at 216-443-5700 or at ema@cuyahogacounty.us