

2016 Severe Weather Fact Sheet

National Weather Service Lincoln, IL

Severe Weather Preparedness Week: February 28 – March 5, 2016

- **A statewide Tornado Drill will be conducted at 10:00 am Tuesday March 1st**
 - All NWS offices in IL will issue an actual Tornado Warning as a test for all 102 counties in the state
 - The test warning will clearly state that NO SEVERE WEATHER is occurring, and that we are doing this for test purposes
 - We don't do this to scare people, but we do this to adequately test the Emergency Alert System (EAS) that radio and TV broadcasters use to warn the public of hazardous weather. This is also done to verify that people using weather alert radios can receive an actual tornado warning.
 - This has been done for more than 25 years – every first Tuesday in March at 10 am.
 - Use of an actual Tornado Warning for this test has been approved by NWS Headquarters, the Federal Communications Commission and the Illinois Broadcasters Association

- **The main themes for this year's Severe Weather Preparedness Week are:**
 - The record rain and flooding in late December 2015 contributed to the deaths of 10 people in Illinois. A total of 14 people died due to floods in Illinois during 2015 – the most in nearly 50 years. **Most of the fatalities were due to people driving through flooded roads.**
 - **NEVER attempt to drive across a flooded roadway, particularly at night, when it is difficult to judge the depth of the water – TURN AROUND DON'T DROWN**
 - It only takes about 24 inches of water to cause a vehicle to float and get swept away in flood waters – including SUVs & pickup trucks
 - **It is VERY important for people to be prepared for floods, tornadoes and severe thunderstorms all year in the state of Illinois.**
 - Have a designated place to take shelter in your home, business, school and anywhere people gather
 - If flooding is occurring or imminent you may need to evacuate your home quickly. Remember the dangers of driving on flooding roads. Call for help if you are stranded and can't evacuate safely.

- In the event of a tornado, go to the basement under a sturdy piece of furniture or the stairwell. Otherwise, go to the lowest level in a small area, like a closet, interior hallway or bathroom without windows.
- Have an Emergency Supply Kit with extra clothing, money, water, non-perishable foods, medications, tools and flashlights
- **Do NOT just rely on outdoor warning sirens to alert you that a tornado or severe storm is approaching.** Have multiple ways to receive information such as:
 - Weather Alert Radio
 - Portable radio with battery backup
 - Wireless Emergency Alerts on most smart phones
 - Cell phone apps that will send you warnings for your area
 - Local TV and radio stations

Severe Weather Impacts

- The **United States experiences more tornadoes than any other country** in the world! An average of nearly 1,300 tornadoes impact the U.S. every year.
- **Illinois averages about 49 tornadoes** each year. Last year, 69 tornadoes were reported in Illinois resulting in 2 fatalities and 27 injuries, causing more than \$50 Million in property damage.
- Tornadoes in Illinois have killed 222 people, and injured 4,472 since 1950.
- The biggest tornado outbreak in Illinois since 1950 occurred on **April 19, 1996**. A total of 39 tornadoes were reported on that day, including four F3 tornadoes. One person was killed, 74 people were injured, and property damage exceeded \$100 Million.
- High wind from **downbursts and straight-line winds** cause **more damage than nearly 75% of the tornadoes** that occur in Illinois! Illinois averages around 550 reports of thunderstorm related wind damage each year.
- **22 people have died from damaging winds in Illinois the past 15 years.** Since 2000 there have been more than 125 people injured in Illinois from severe thunderstorm wind.

Central / Southeast Illinois Severe Weather Statistics

- Of the top 20 counties with the most tornadoes in the state, **12 are in central or eastern Illinois**. These are:

Logan (ranked #2), **Tazewell** (#3), **Sangamon** (#4), **McLean** (#5), **Woodford** (#6), **Macon** (#11), **Champaign** (#12), **Piatt** (#13), **Douglas** (#16), **Vermilion** (#18), **Mason** (#19) and **Coles** (#20).

[Data based on tornadoes per square mile from 1950-2015]

- Since 2008, **73% of all severe weather events** (damaging winds, tornadoes and large hail) in central and southeast Illinois **had advance warning** by the NWS in Lincoln, with an **average lead time of 16 minutes**.
- Based on severe weather reports the past 10 years, the calendar date with the **highest probability of severe weather** in central and eastern Illinois is **June 20th**. This is followed by June 1st, May 28th – 31st, June 22nd and June 25th.

Severe Weather Warnings

- NWS Implementation of storm based warnings for smaller areas, and portions of counties, has resulted in a **79% reduction of false alarms across central and eastern Illinois since 2008**.
- **In 2016**, NWS offices will continue to put **enhanced wording in all Tornado Warnings**.
 - This is intended to improve communications of the anticipated threats and impacts of tornadoes. **Specific information in the warning will highlight the tornadoes that are expected to produce, or confirm the occurrence of, considerable or catastrophic damage**.

Severe Weather Preparedness

- The National Weather Service's goal is to build a "**Weather Ready Nation**". The purpose of this initiative is to save lives as well as livelihoods. By increasing the nation's weather readiness the country will be better prepared to protect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from weather-related disasters.

Visit our website at: www.weather.gov/Lincoln for the latest weather and river forecasts, warnings, current conditions, radar & satellite imagery, and climate information.