

Early notification is key in protecting yourself from severe weather

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Area first responders said if they had one piece of advice to share to protect residents from the threats of severe weather, it would be this: Purchase a weather radio.

"Go out and get yourself a weather radio," said Frederick Chief of Police Gary Barbour. "They're inexpensive and they work."

Lt. Stacy Davis of the Firestone Police Department and Chief Ted Poszywak of the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District echoed Barbour's remarks.

"There is a huge push to have weather radios," Davis said. "They can give you the most timely information."

With the abundance of severe weather in the area lately, including tornadoes spotted in Dacono and Firestone, Davis urged area residents to be proactive in protecting themselves from the threat of tornadoes and other storms. Families can purchase weather radios online or in a number of stores including Wal-Mart and Radio Shack, she said.

A weather radio will provide its owner with information on current severe weather in the area, and some can be programmed for specific incidents, for example, to only alert the owner in the event of a tornado warning or only provide alerts from the immediate area.

Due to a grant, all of the area schools now have weather radios, Davis said. And Poszywak said because of a \$2,000 donation given to the fire district from the new Home Depot store in Firestone last week, the district will be able to give out weather radios to the public in free raffles at the district's community safety days four times a year.

Dacono residents have an additional tool at their disposal for severe weather notification. The majority of the city's residents take advantage of the Connecticut system implemented by the city last year. The system notifies residents by sending a text message, e-mail, or voice message in the event of a tornado warning. Dacono residents who have not yet provided their information to be included in the system can visit the city's Web site, www.ci.dacono.co.us for more informa-

tion. Another sentiment shared by first responders was for residents to not rely on sirens. Dacono has one inactive tornado siren, while Frederick and Firestone each have an active siren.

Sirens are designed to notify those who are outside that a tor-

nado has been spotted, Poszywak said, and are not designed to be heard inside or to be relied upon as the only means of notification for area residents. Weather radios and news reports are the most timely way to receive information, he said.

"A combination of all of those TV and radio."

Davis also stressed the importance of having a 72-hour emergency kit and a plan in place in the event of severe weather or other emergencies. For information on emergency kits and forming your own emergency plan, visit www.readynortheast.org.

WATCHES AND WARNINGS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The National Weather Service uses specific terminology to relay the weather threat to the public. In the summer, there are a variety of watches and warnings you need to understand in order to be prepared.

Tornado Watch

Conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop. It is normally issued for 4 to 6 hours and includes many counties.

If you are in or near the tornado watch area, stay informed via NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television. Keep your eye on the sky, and be prepared to take cover at short notice, as tornadoes can occur with little or no warning.

Tornado Warning

A tornado has been sighted or a developing tornado is reported by trained spotters or indicated on Doppler radar. A warning is typically issued for a small area for less than an hour. If a tornado warning is issued in your area, take cover immediately!

Severe Thunderstorm Watch

Conditions are favorable for thunderstorms to produce wind gusts to 58 mph or stronger, or hail to 3/4 inch or larger. If the watch area, these watches are issued for 4 to 6 hours at a time and for a number of counties. Stay informed, watch the sky, and take cover

if a severe thunderstorm approaches you.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning

A severe thunderstorm has been detected by radar or a trained spotter. Take cover if you are near the severe thunderstorm.

Flash Flood Watch

This is issued when a heavy rain may develop and result in flash flooding in or near the watch area.

Flash Flood Warning

Flash flooding in the warning area has developed or is imminent. Move to higher ground at once!

Urban and Small Stream Flood Advisory

Local flooding of small streams, creeks, or low lying areas such as railroad underpasses is occurring or is imminent.

Information provided by the Frederick Firestone Fire Protection District

SEVERE WEATHER FACTS:

- Flash floods are the no. 1 weather related killer.
- Colorado weather can range from a mild wind storm to a voracious tornado, damaging hail storm, or severe thunderstorm. Colorado's first week of spring in 2003 brought a winter storm that compared to the worst Colorado had seen in 1913.
- Lightning kills 75 to 100 people yearly. Nationwide, this is more people than are killed by either tornadoes or hurricanes.
- Large hail causes tremendous damage annually to property and crops.
- Compared with other states, Colorado ranks ninth for frequency of tornadoes, 38th for number of deaths, 31st for injuries and 30th for cost of damages.
- Colorado saw the worst wildfire season in its history in 2002, with 3,072 wildfires burning over 600,000 acres.

Information provided by the Frederick Firestone Fire Protection District