



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MARCH 27-31 IS SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK

Be “Family Prepared” for dangerous weather conditions this spring

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD), National Weather Service (NWS), and Iowa Emergency Management Association (IEMA) have joined together to promote Severe Weather Awareness Week, March 27-31.

“Iowa is no stranger to severe weather,” said HSEMD Director John Benson. “We frequently see tornadoes, flooding, straight-line winds and even derechos. So take the time now to prepare yourself and your family so you know what to do if severe weather is headed your way.”



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Benson urges Iowans to take three simple steps to be better prepared:

- Be aware of weather hazards by signing up for emergency notifications through Alert Iowa (alert.iowa.gov) or use a NOAA Weather Radio or other type of alerting tool.
- Make an emergency plan with your family. Think about where you will go and what actions you will need to take to stay safe if you are impacted by severe weather.
- Build an emergency kit with items you and your family will need if you must evacuate your home.

For each day during Severe Weather Awareness Week a different subject will be highlighted:

- Monday – Severe thunderstorms
- Tuesday – Weather alerts
- Wednesday – Tornadoes
- Thursday – Family preparedness
- Friday – Flash floods

The annual statewide tornado drill will take place on Wed., March 29, beginning at 10 a.m. during the weekly NOAA Weather Radio test. In the event of severe weather, the drill will be postponed to March 30 at 10 a.m. Additional information about the tornado drill can be found on local NWS websites.

SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

The National Weather Service officially defines severe thunderstorms as storms that are capable of producing hail that is an inch or larger or wind gusts over 58 mph. Hail this size can damage property such as plants, roofs, and vehicles. Wind this strong is able to break off large branches, knock over trees, or cause structural damage to trees.



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Some thunderstorms can produce hail larger than softballs or winds over 100 mph, so please pay attention to the weather as you know when severe storms are possible. Thunderstorms can also produce tornadoes and dangerous lightning, and heavy rain can cause flash flooding.

To learn more, visit the [Severe Thunderstorm Safety](#) page on the National Weather Service website.

[Learn About Thunderstorms](#)

[Thunderstorm Safety \(PDF\)](#)

RECEIVING WARNING INFORMATION

Today's technology offers many ways to be alerted to severe weather. The most important point is to be intentional and proactive by having multiple ways to receive warnings, know which hazards alert on the various systems, choose the alert methods that work best for you in different situations (at home, at the ball park, etc.), and react quickly when the hazard occurs.

Some types of alerting systems include:

- [NOAA Weather Radio](#)
- [Wireless Emergency Alerts \(WEA\)](#)
- [Alert Iowa](#)

WEATHER WARNINGS

Do you know the difference between a National Weather Service Severe Thunderstorm Watch and a Severe Thunderstorm Warning? Check your knowledge below.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Be Prepared! Severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Stay informed and be ready to act if a severe thunderstorm warning is issued. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.



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Severe Thunderstorm Warning: Take Action! Severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property. Take shelter in a substantial building. Get out of mobile homes that can blow over in high winds. Warnings typically encompass a much smaller area (around the size of a city or small county) that may be impacted by a large hail or damaging wind identified by an NWS forecaster on radar or by a trained spotter/law enforcement who is watching the storm.

[Watches and Warnings \(PDF\)](#)

TORNADO SAFETY

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm down to the ground. Tornadoes are capable of completely destroying well-made structures, uprooting trees, and hurling objects through the air like deadly missiles. Tornadoes can occur at any time of day or night and at any time of the year. Although tornadoes are most common in the Central Plains and the southeastern United States, they have been reported in all 50 states.

To learn more, visit the [Tornado Safety](#) page on the National Weather Service website.

FAMILY PREPAREDNESS

There are three simple steps that you can take to be more prepared at any time of the year for any emergency including weather related hazards.

- **Build A Kit** – Create an emergency supply kit that would have everything that you would need to sustain you and your family for three to five days.
- **Make A Plan** – Knowing what to do in the event of an emergency is key. Make sure that everyone in your family knows what to do in the event of an emergency and practice that plan.
- **Be Aware** – Learn about the hazards that can affect your community, and learn how to get information about current weather and road conditions.



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More information can be found at [READY IOWA](#).

FLOOD SAFETY

Flooding is a coast-to-coast threat in the United States and Muscatine has the annual threat of spring flooding of the Mississippi River. The National Weather Service offers a [Flood Safety Tips and Resources](#) page with valuable information on what to do before a flood, during a flood, and after a flood.

While there is more time to prepare for river flooding, there is little time to prepare for a flash flood, a rapid rise of water in low-lying areas that can be caused by heavy rain, ice or debris jams, and levee or dam failure. The most common cause in Muscatine is copious amounts of rainfall from thunderstorms. Remember to turn around and don't drown.

Types of Advisories, Watches and Warnings

The information provided on the [Ready Iowa Be Aware](#) page is courtesy of the National Weather Service (NWS). These are hazards that regularly affect the state of Iowa. For additional information, visit your local [NWS website](#).

Floods

- A **flood watch** is issued when current and developing conditions are such that there is a threat of flooding, but the occurrence is neither certain nor imminent.
- A **flood warning** is issued when there is flooding along larger streams causing a serious threat to life or property. A flood warning will usually contain river stage (level) forecasts.
- A **flash flood watch** indicates that flash flooding is possible in and close to the watch area. Those in the affected area are urged to be ready to take quick action if a flash flood warning is issued or flooding is observed.
- A **flash flood warning** signifies a dangerous situation where rapid flooding of small rivers, streams, creeks, or urban areas is imminent or already occurring.



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Heat

- A **heat advisory** is issued within 12 hours of the onset of the following conditions: heat index of at least 105°F but less than 115°F for less than three hours per day, or nighttime lows above 80°F for two consecutive days.

Tornadoes/Wind

- A **tornado watch** means that conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes in and close to the watch area.
- A **tornado warning** means that a tornado is indicated by radar or has been sighted by storm spotters. The warning will include where the tornado is and what towns will be in its path.
- A **wind advisory** is issued with sustained winds from 25 to 39 mph and/or gusts to 57 mph.

Severe Thunderstorms

- A **severe thunderstorm watch** means that conditions are favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms in and close to the watch area.
- A **severe thunderstorm warning** is issued when a thunderstorm produces hail 3/4 of an inch or larger in diameter and/or winds which equal or exceed 58 mph. Severe thunderstorms can result in the loss of life and/or property. Information in this warning includes: where the storm is, what towns will be affected, and the primary threat associated with the storm.

The NWS developed two new categories of damage threat for Severe Thunderstorm Warnings. These tags and additional messaging are designed to promote immediate action, based on the threats.

- The criteria for a **destructive damage threat** are at least 2.75-inch diameter (baseball-sized) hail and/or 80 mph thunderstorm winds. Warnings with this tag will automatically activate a WEA on smartphones within the warned area.
- The criteria for a **considerable damage threat** are at least 1.75-inch diameter (golf ball-sized) hail and/or 70 mph thunderstorm winds. This will not activate a WEA.

Winter Weather



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- A **winter storm watch** indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area.
- A **winter storm warning** indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way or are already here.
- A **blizzard warning** means that large amounts of falling or blowing snow and sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.
- A **blowing snow advisory** is issued when wind-driven snow reduces surface visibility, possibly hampering travel.
- A **wind chill advisory** is issued when the wind chill could be life threatening if action is not taken.
- A **wind chill warning** is issued when the wind chill is life threatening.
- A **freezing rain/drizzle advisory** is issued when freezing rain or freezing drizzle is forecast but a significant accumulation is not expected. However, even small amounts of freezing rain or freezing drizzle may cause significant travel problems.

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