FLORIDA SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK  
JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 4, 2011  

“THUNDERSTORMS AND TORNADOES”

FLORIDA’S SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK TAKES PLACE FROM JANUARY 31ST THROUGH FEBRUARY 4TH, 2011. SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FLORIDIANS TO LEARN ABOUT THE VARIOUS WEATHER HAZARDS THAT FREQUENTLY IMPACT THE STATE AND HOW FAMILIES AND BUSINESSES CAN PREPARE FOR THESE NATURAL EVENTS.

EACH DAY FOCUSES ON A SPECIFIC WEATHER EVENT AND WEDNESDAY’S FOCUS IS ON THUNDERSTORMS AND TORNADOES.

THUNDERSTORMS OCCUR FREQUENTLY ACROSS FLORIDA. IN FACT, FLORIDA HAS THE GREATEST NUMBER OF THUNDERSTORMS IN THE UNITED STATES, AVERAGING OVER 70-100 DAYS EACH YEAR IN WHICH A PART OF FLORIDA EXPERIENCES THUNDERSTORMS. ONE OF THE REASONS FLORIDA HAS SO MANY THUNDERSTORMS IS THAT MANY OF THE INGREDIENTS NEEDED TO CREATE THUNDERSTORMS CAN BE FOUND HERE ALMOST EVERY DAY. WHEN THESE THUNDERSTORMS DEVELOP AND BECOME STRONG, THEY CAN PRODUCE HAZARDS SUCH AS LIGHTNING, HAIL, GUSTY WINDS, HEAVY RAIN, AND TORNADOES.

TORNADOES AND SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS ARE MORE COMMON IN FLORIDA THAN PEOPLE MAY THINK. SINCE 1970, MORE THAN 2,500 TORNADOES HAVE BEEN REPORTED ACROSS THE STATE OF FLORIDA, RESULTING IN OVER 140 DEATHS AND 2000 INJURIES.

THUNDERSTORMS COME IN DIFFERENT FORMS. THEY CAN COME AS A SINGLE THUNDERSTORM CLOUD OR HAVE A FAMILY OF CLOUDS. ALSO, THUNDERSTORMS MAY LAST A LONG TIME OR AS BRIEF AS A FEW MINUTES. TORNADOES VARY IN SIZE, SHAPE AND INTENSITY, BUT ARE ALL DANGEROUS. THEY CAN BE SPAWNED BY THUNDERSTORMS ALONG SEA BREEZE BOUNDARIES, A COLD FRONT, OR EVEN THE SPIRAL BANDS AROUND A TROPICAL STORM OR HURRICANE.

TORNADOES CAN ALSO FORM OVER THE WATER, WHICH ARE CALLED WATERSPOUTS. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT MORE THAN 300 WATERSPOUTS OCCUR EACH YEAR ALONG THE FLORIDA COAST. MOST OF THESE ARE WEAK, BUT WATERSPOUTS THAT REACH THE SHORE CAN CAUSE THE SAME DAMAGE AS A TORNADO.
IF A TORNADO STRUCK TOMORROW WOULD YOU BE PREPARED? WOULD YOU
KNOW WHAT ACTIONS TO TAKE? IN FLORIDA, TORNADOES STRIKE ALL TOO
OFTEN. DID YOU KNOW THAT FLORIDA HAS THE THIRD HIGHEST NUMBER OF
TORNADO OCCURRENCES EACH YEAR? ONLY TEXAS AND KANSAS AVERAGE
MORE TORNADOES IN A YEAR. PLANNING AND PRACTICE ARE KEYS TO
TORNADO SAFETY. WHETHER IN HOMES, SCHOOLS OR BUSINESSES, EVERYONE
SHOULD HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE FOR SEvere WEATHER.

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE AND THE FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT WILL CONDUCT A STATEWIDE TORNADO DRILL ON WEDNESDAY,
FEBRUARY 2, AT 10:10AM EST/9:10AM CST. FLORIDIANS ARE ASKED TO
CONSIDER THEMSELVES UNDER A TORNADO WATCH DURING THAT MORNING,
MEANING CONDITIONS ARE FAVORABLE FOR TORNADO DEVELOPMENT AND YOU
SHOULD CLOSELY MONITOR THE WEATHER AND BE PREPARED TO GO TO A SAFE
PLACE IN THE EVENT OF A TORNADO WARNING. AT 10:10AM EASTERN/9:10AM
CENTRAL, THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WILL ISSUE A DRILL TORNADO
WARNING. THIS WARNING WILL BE BROADCAST ON NOAA WEATHER RADIO AND
THE EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM AS A WEEKLY TEST MESSAGE. THE DRILL WILL
CONCLUDE AROUND 10:30 AM.

FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO DEVELOP A FAMILY TORNADO PLAN, GO TO
WWW.FLORIDADISASTER.ORG