



STATE OF FLORIDA

# DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

RICK SCOTT  
Governor

BRYAN W. KOON  
Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2012

**CONTACT: PUBLIC INFORMATION**  
(850) 413-9969  
[www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org)



**January 30-February 3, 2012**

**Florida's Severe Weather Awareness Week** takes place from January 30 – February 3, 2012. 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. **Wednesday's focus is thunderstorms and tornadoes.**

Thunderstorms occur quite frequently across Florida. On average, there are 75 to 105 thunderstorm days per year statewide. Hazards within thunderstorms include lightning, hail, gusty winds, heavy rain that may cause flooding, and tornadoes.

One of the reasons Florida experiences so many thunderstorms per year is that the ingredients needed to create a thunderstorm can be found here almost every day. Multiple sources of water vapor, plenty of sunlight and approaching fronts or sea breezes all contribute to the development of thunderstorms. Thunderstorms can take different forms. A storm can have only one thunderstorm cloud, or a family of clouds (also known as cells,) associated with them. The duration of a thunderstorm may be as brief as a few minutes, or last an extensive amount time.

Local National Weather Service offices around the state have meteorologists and technicians monitoring weather patterns every hour of the day, every day of the year, in order to issue timely warnings when thunderstorms have the potential to become severe. These warnings make it possible for residents and visitors to move to a place of safety.

**DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WATCH AND A WARNING?**  
A **Severe Thunderstorm Watch** means that conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop. When a watch is issued, you should keep a close eye on the weather.

**(MORE)**

FLORIDA RECOVERY OFFICE • DIVISION HEADQUARTERS • STATE LOGISTICS RESPONSE CENTER

5900 Lake Ellenor Drive  
Orlando, FL 32809

2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100  
Tel: 850-413-9969 • Fax: 850-488-1016

2702 Directors Row  
Orlando, FL 32809-5631

[www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org)

## Severe Weather Awareness Week – Thunderstorms and Tornadoes - - Page Two

A **Severe Thunderstorm Warning** means that a severe thunderstorm is imminent and action should be taken immediately. Upon a warning being issued, you should quickly seek secure indoor shelter, stay away from windows and monitor a NOAA All-Hazards Weather Radio or other battery powered device for updates. Avoid driving into severe storms; pull over and wait for the storm to pass.

Severe thunderstorms have the potential to produce tornadoes. Tornadoes are violent columns of rotating air that descend from thunderstorms and reach the ground. Tornadoes usually last only a few minutes, but can quickly cause significant damage. History shows that tornadoes are just as likely to form after midnight as they are during the afternoon and early evening.

Tornadoes that form over water are called waterspouts. Waterspouts may be weak in formation, but upon reaching the shore, can cause the same damage as a tornado. Boaters and those on the beach need to quickly move away a waterspout, as they can easily cause a vessel to flip.

**DID YOU KNOW?** *It is estimated that more than 400 waterspouts occur each year along the Florida Keys alone, with hundreds also reported along other areas of the Florida coast.*

The relatively small and short-lived nature of most tornadoes makes giving advance warning extremely difficult. The National Weather Service uses tools and volunteers to watch for severe weather. Local NWS offices will issue a Tornado Warning when a tornado is either seen by a trained severe weather spotter or is indicated by Doppler radar. Having a NOAA All-Hazards Weather radio at home and at work is critical, as a weather radio can alert you when an official warning has been issued.

A **Tornado Watch** means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop. A **Tornado Warning** means a tornado has been indicated by radar or spotted on the ground.

**If a Tornado Warning is issued for your area, seek shelter immediately!** Those in mobile homes should immediately find a stronger building or house for shelter. If caught outdoors or on the road, try to seek shelter in a nearby structure. If this is not possible, try to get as low as possible, such as a creek bed or ditch, and cover your head. Do not seek shelter under bridges, and do not try to outrun a tornado.

In Florida, tornadoes strike all too often. Whether in homes, schools or businesses, everyone should have an emergency plan in place for severe weather. For information about thunderstorm and tornado hazards, and tips on how to protect yourself and your family, visit [www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/safety/tornadoguide.html](http://www.nssl.noaa.gov/edu/safety/tornadoguide.html) and [www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org).

**Thursday's focus is hurricanes and flooding.**

For more information on the Florida Division of Emergency Management and to GET A PLAN!, please visit: [www.FloridaDisaster.org](http://www.FloridaDisaster.org). Follow us on Twitter at [www.Twitter.com/FLSERT](https://www.Twitter.com/FLSERT) or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/FloridaSERT>.

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