

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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S.C. Severe Weather and Flood Safety Week – March 10-16, 2019

COLLETON COUNTY, S.C.— Governor Henry McMaster has proclaimed that South Carolina Severe Weather and Flood Safety Week for 2019 will be observed March 10-16.

The South Carolina Emergency Management Division and the National Weather Service jointly sponsor the week to remind people that severe storms, tornadoes and flash floods are significant hazards in South Carolina and people need to take proper safety precautions.

Colleton County Fire-Rescue, SCEMD and the National Weather Service are promoting awareness of the hazards associated with severe weather, including tornadoes and floods, and the procedures that help keep people safe.

Fire-Rescue Chief Barry McRoy states, “Colleton County experiences an increased risk of severe weather and tornadoes during the spring months. S.C. Severe Weather and Flood Safety Week is an excellent reminder for our citizens to be prepared and to review what to do if severe weather strikes our county.”

A highlight of the week will be the annual statewide tornado drill. The drill is conducted in close coordination with the South Carolina Broadcasters Association. The State Superintendent of Education is encouraging schools statewide to participate. South Carolina has received a waiver from the Federal Communications Commission to use the Tornado Warning product on NOAA tone-alert weather radio when the drill is conducted. During the drill, the National Weather Service will use a real-event code, TOR. The “TOR” code will activate tone-alert weather radios that are set to receive tornado warnings, and those radios will broadcast the exercise message.

The drill will be conducted Wednesday, March 13, at 9 a.m. Public schools, state and local Emergency Management, the South Carolina Broadcasters Association, and others will participate in this annual event. The purpose of the drill is to test communication systems, safety procedures, mitigation processes, etc.

For further information on Severe Weather and Flood Safety Week, contact Colleton County Fire-Rescue – Emergency Management Division’s Emergency Operations Center at 843-549-5632. Additional resources can be found online at www.colletonfire.com/em or scemd.org/prepare/ and weather.gov/cae/2019_SC_Severe_Weather_Preparedness_Week.html. The SC Emergency Manager App is also a great tool to help individuals plan and prepare for emergencies. It is free to download in the App Store and Google Play.

[Prepare for any Emergency:](#)

- Develop an Emergency Action Plan for your home, place of business or other that includes what you would do in case of major emergency or disaster.
- Develop a communication plan that enables you to reach out to family members when normal lines of communication are not functioning.
- Have an emergency kit for your home, place of work and vehicle. Remember, "The First 72 are on You."

Before a Tornado

- Be alert to changing weather conditions.
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information.
- Look for approaching storms.
- Look for the following danger signs:
 - Dark, often greenish sky
 - Large hail
 - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
 - Loud roar, similar to a train
- If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.

During a Tornado

- If you are under a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately.
- Get indoors to a pre-designated shelter area such as a basement, storm cellar or the lowest building level. If there is no basement, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level (closet, interior hallway) away from corners, windows, doors and outside walls.
- If in a vehicle, trailer or mobile home, get out immediately and go to the lowest floor of a sturdy, nearby building or storm shelter.
- If unable to get indoors, lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. Be aware of potential flooding and flying debris.
- Never try to outrun a tornado in your vehicle. Instead, leave the vehicle immediately for safe shelter.

After a Tornado

- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Avoid downed power lines and report them to your utility company.
- Stay out of damaged buildings.

Before a Flood

- Avoid building in a flood prone area unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install check valves in sewer traps to prevent floodwater from backing up into the drains of your home.

- Seal the walls in your basement with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.
- Consider purchasing sandbags in advance because they will be in high demand during a flood emergency. Review your insurance policy. Flood coverage is not part of most homeowner, mobile home or renter's insurance policies. There is a 30-day waiting period for coverage to take effect.

During a Flood

- Be aware of potential flash flooding. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move to higher ground. Do not wait to be told to move.
- If time allows, prepare your home for a flood by moving essential items to an upper floor, bring in outdoor furniture, disconnect electrical appliances and be prepared to turn off the gas, electricity and water.
- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle could be quickly swept away.

After a Flood

- After a flood, listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Even if the roadway of a bridge or elevated highway looks normal, the support structures below may be damaged.
- Stay clear of downed power lines and report them to your power company.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly to foundations. Stay out of any building that is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and other harmful chemicals.