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**KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT**  
**Lawrence A. Stelma – Sheriff**

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701 Ball Avenue, N.E. • Grand Rapids • Michigan • 49503



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 2, 2015**

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**Michigan Severe Weather Week Reminder: Be Prepared**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – Last year, there were 13 tornadoes across the state of Michigan. The most damaging was an EF1 tornado in Kent County in July. The tornado started near 60th and Clyde Park SW, moving northeast through Kentwood, and ending near 44th and Kalamazoo SE. The twister traveled 6 miles, damaging homes and causing six injuries in its path. Michigan had 13 tornadoes (just short of the annual average of 15) and fortunately, no one was killed in these storms. Other severe weather incidents in the state caused one death, 13 injuries, and the most damaging severe weather season in Michigan’s history. Be vigilant whenever severe weather is in the forecast. April 12-18 is Michigan Severe Weather Awareness Week.

This year, as we enter Michigan Severe Weather Awareness Week, it’s a great time to refresh your supplies and make sure you are prepared. Make sure you have a flashlight, fresh batteries, enough water for three days, canned food items and a can opener, an all-weather radio, and a first aid kit. You should also remember the difference between a watch and a warning:

**WATCH:** The potential exists for the development of storms/tornados. You can continue your normal activities, but be mindful of changing conditions.

**WARNING:** Severe storms are imminent or occurring. Move indoors to a place of safety. If it is a Tornado Warning, take shelter in a basement or the inner-most closet of your home.

“While no location is completely safe from a tornado or severe thunderstorm, it is important to seek all possible protection,” said Jack Stewart, Kent County Emergency Management Coordinator. “Make sure you and your family take cover in a location on the lowest level of the building, like the basement, or in a small, windowless room at the innermost part of the building. Protect yourself by covering your body with items such as a coat or blanket.” In the event of a tornado, kneel down and bend into a ball-like position, using your arms to cover your head and neck. If flooding occurs, move to higher grounds and evacuate quickly if told to do so.

Plan in advance for disasters to know how you and your family will get to a safe place, how to contact each other and what to do in different situations. Determine a location where you would meet in an emergency, both near your house and further away, in case your neighborhood streets are closed. If a disaster occurs, it may be easier to make a long-distance phone call to a designated out-of-town contact, as phone lines may be overwhelmed. Make sure that person is aware that he or she is the designated contact. You should also have a disaster plan for your pets as well.

To learn more about Michigan Severe Weather Awareness Week 2015, [click here](#).

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