



KENT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Lawrence A. Stelma – Sheriff

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



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 5, 2018

Contact: Lisa LaPlante – Lisa.LaPlante@KentCountyMI.gov

Monthly Tornado/High Winds Warning Sirens to Start Friday

April 9-13 is Michigan Severe Weather Awareness Week

GRAND RAPIDS – Dangerous, deadly weather can strike in an instant. Last July, severe thunderstorms hit southwest Lower Michigan, causing hundreds of trees and power lines to fall from Grand Haven to near Jackson. One gust measured 88 mph at Grand Valley State University. Kent County has a system of sirens to alert residents of high winds or tornadoes. Starting Friday, April 6, 2018 and continuing on the first Friday of every month at 12:00 noon through October, tornado alarm testing should be heard in Kent County homes and businesses.

It is important to 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. “Earlier this year, our threat was flooding. We were fortunate that early warnings had everyone on stand-by, especially those living in flood-prone areas,” said Jack Stewart, Kent County Emergency Management Coordinator. “High winds and tornadoes are obviously much more difficult to predict. Having an emergency plan in advance is critical to everyone’s safety and survival.”

If you don’t hear the sirens April 6, 2018 at noon, please contact your local township or city office. Be vigilant whenever severe weather is in the forecast. While no location is completely safe from a tornado or severe thunderstorm, it is important to seek all possible protection. Smartphone apps are available that will provide notification of weather watches and warnings. Severe weather **watch** means the potential exists for the development of storms/tornadoes, so be mindful of changing conditions. Severe weather **warning** mean that storms are imminent or occurring. Move indoors to a place of safety. If it is a Tornado Warning, take shelter in a location on the lowest level of the building, such as the basement, or in a small, windowless room at the innermost part of the building.

If a disaster occurs, it may be easier to make a 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. Pet owners should have a disaster plan for pets as well. This is a great time to review severe weather plans, refresh supplies and make sure preparations are complete. Check flashlights and stock up on fresh batteries. Homes should have enough fresh drinking water and canned food items for three days, a can opener, an all-weather radio, and a first aid kit. Check out www.accesskent.com/getready/ for a variety of tip sheets.

(PLEASE NOTE: While some communities in Michigan plan to test their severe weather alerts on Wednesday, April 11, at 1:00 p.m., Kent County will test sirens on the first Friday in April, as has been a long-standing policy in the County. We encourage businesses owners, school officials and families to set aside April 11 as a day to review emergency plans and procedures.)

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