



# READY RACINE



Special Edition

January 2008

## Rare January Tornadoes Slam SE Wisconsin...

On Monday, January 7, 2008, the National Weather Service issued a number of Tornado Warnings for communities in Southeastern Wisconsin.

While Racine County came out of it unscathed, communities in Kenosha County were not so fortunate.

According to the National Weather Service the first tornado spun up in southeast Walworth County and then tracked through the Wheatland and Brighton areas of Western Kenosha County.

The tornado that went through the Wheatland/New Munster area in Western Kenosha County was rated as an EF-3, with estimated top winds between 150-160 mph.

The second tornado occurred in the town of Somers and on the north side of the city of Kenosha. The tornado was ranked an EF-1 with tornadic winds in the 86-110 mph range.

The three tornadoes in Southeast Wisconsin and Northern Illinois were also part of a larger tornado outbreak on January 7th. The majority of the tornadoes occurred in Missouri, where 33 have been confirmed. In all, 48 tornadoes occurred spanning an area from Southeast Wisconsin through Eastern Oklahoma.

Advance warning by the National Weather Service in all likelihood saved lives that day. ❖

## Dispelling Weather Myths

Below are some of the more common weather myths.

**Myth:** Lake Michigan protects us from tornadoes.

**FACT!** Lake Michigan did not protect the Cities of Racine, St. Francis and Kenosha.

**Myth:** Rubber tires on your automobile (or rubber sole shoes) insulate you from lightning strikes. **FACT!** Tires (or rubber sole shoes) offer **NO PROTECTION** from lightning strikes.

**Myth:** Lightning never strikes twice in the same place.

**FACT!** Lightning **repeatedly strikes** the same objects year after year.

**Myth:** A person struck by lightning retains an electric charge and should not be touched. **FACT!** You should administer first aid to a victim as soon as possible. He or she WILL NOT retain any electrical charge.

**Myth:** You can outrun a tornado in your vehicle.

**FACT!** The automobile is the **WORST** place to be during a tornado.

**Myth:** "Downtowns are protected from tornadoes."

**FACT!** Downtowns of large cities are no more protected from tornadoes than are the plains of Kansas.

**Myth:** The best place to be during a tornado is in the southwest corner of a building or basement. **FACT!** The safest place is an interior room on the north side of the building or basement..

**Myth:** Opening windows to equalize air pressure will save a roof, or even a home, from destruction by a tornado. **FACT!** Homes are damaged by strong winds, not air pressure changes.

**Myth:** Wind only moves vertically (gets sucked up) in a tornado. **FACT!** In most cases, the strongest horizontal and vertical components of the wind can be found not far above the surface.

[www.srh.noaa.gov/fwd/media/severe/s\\_safetyf.htm](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/fwd/media/severe/s_safetyf.htm)

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### Did you know...

**...the Racine County Communications Center answered 113 calls between 4 and 5 pm during the Tornado Warning on January 7th?**

## Weather Radios Save Lives

Racine County Emergency Management urges all residents and businesses to get NOAA weather radios. NOAA weather radios provide immediate broadcasts of severe weather warnings and civil emergency messages, giving those in harm's way critical lead time to respond and remain safe.

"Many people believe that they can rely upon outdoor warning sirens to alert them of severe weather," commented David Maack, Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator, "but outdoor warning sirens are designed to be heard outdoors, not indoors; and not every community has outdoor warning sirens."

Outdoor warning sirens are just one of many tools used to warn the public of approaching tornadoes. In addition, they are only activated when the National Weather Service issues a tornado warning, not for severe thunderstorms, which often have hurricane force winds and can be just as dangerous.

NOAA weather radios are inexpensive sources of fast, reliable information directly from the National Weather Service. Weather radios receive broadcasts on all types of hazards, including tornado warnings, flood warnings, AMBER Alerts for child abductions, chemical spill messages, and many other notifications, as well as routine weather observations and forecasts.

Weather radios come in many sizes and with a variety of functions and costs. Many of the radios sound a tone alarm and/or turn on the audio when severe weather announcements/emergency information are broadcast.

### Features of NOAA Weather Radio

- **Tone Alarm:** Special tones precede the initial broadcast of all emergency announcements regarding immediate weather threats and civil emergency messages to gain a listener's attention. These tones will also activate radios that are on alert mode, yet silent. This feature is especially crucial when severe storms or other events occur at night when most people are sound asleep.

- **Size:** Units are small (about the size of a clock radio) and require little space on a nightstand or table. They travel easily (vacations, relocations) and will use the signal from a nearby transmitter.

- **Battery Backup:** Ensures continued service during a loss of electricity, which can disable the warning capabilities of television and the Internet.

- **Customization:** Most models featuring SAME (Specific Area Message Encoding) technology can be programmed to sound only select alerts for select areas—in essence, blocking undesired messages,

especially those that apply outside the local area.

- **Accessories:** Many radios allow customization for an external antenna to improve reception; and for devices for the hearing or visually impaired, such as strobe lights, pagers, or bed shakers.

"NOAA weather radios should be as common as smoke detectors," commented David Maack, "Every home and business should have one. They will and do help save lives by providing advanced warning." ❖

## A Personal Account

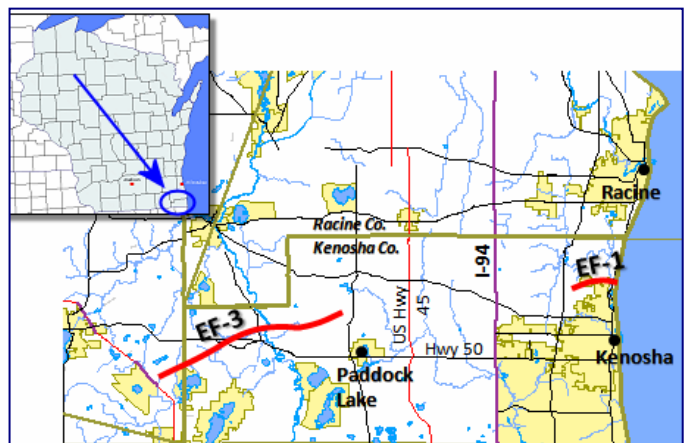
**By Diane Andrekus, Public Health Specialist  
Kenosha County Division of Health**

We had a wake-up call Monday night at our house. Our subdivision was hit by the tornado - three houses were hit - two are gone. We are so fortunate and are still in shock that our home was spared.

I have an empty preparedness kit in my basement - I was going to fill it tomorrow, but tomorrow passed me by several times. All of our important documents are in a bin in a closet on the first floor. What if...? Now our yard is filled with pieces of other lives - siding, insulation, drywall - and some of their memories. My daughter found a page from someone's yearbook.

Tonight, I am going to Target and Super Valu to buy what I need to fill my preparedness kit. A sample kit is in the ice room. My important documents are being moved to the basement. And, most importantly, our family now has a plan to contact each other to make sure we are all safe. Please do the same at your home. Who ever thought we would have a tornado in January. We certainly never thought it would devastate our community.

Finally, say a prayer for all of those who did lose everything - and, another for the all the lives that were saved. ❖



## Tornado Warnings

By National Weather Service

Knowing if a tornado warning has been issued for your local area may be the difference between life and death. Shouldn't you know how to find out if a tornado warning has been issued by the National Weather Service (NWS)?

Hard to believe in today's high-tech world that some people in certain tornado situations didn't know that tornado warnings had been issued or that there were actual tornadoes in progress in their home county. Potentially, this can happen in any county in this country.

There are many ways to acquire information about tornado warnings or actual tornadoes in progress. Let's review them.

1. Have a NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards unit in your home, business, and school. In countless situations, weather radios have saved lives. The NWS can tone-activate your weather radio, even in the middle of the night when you are sleeping. The weather radio is the smoke alarm of the weather world. Make sure you purchase one that is programmable and has a battery backup...in case you lose electrical power. Most electronic stores sell weather radios. Can't think of what to buy someone for a gift?...buy them a weather radio...it may save their life! Weather radios are designed to give you quick, direct, warning information from the NWS. Information on NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards can be found on this web site - on our main page.

2. Commercial & public radio and television stations, as well as cable-TV. There's a ton of weather information provided by the broadcast media...why not use that resource? Television can help you "paint the complete picture" in order to figure out if you are in harm's way. NOAA Weather Radio can give you a quick alert, but you can use other media outlets to "paint the complete picture."

3. Outdoor sirens. These are designed to be heard outdoors - hence the name "outdoor sirens." They may not be heard indoors. Additionally, lightning, power outages, downburst winds, and the tornado itself may put the outdoor siren out-of-commission. Know when the outdoor sirens are activated for tests in your local area. If you do hear the siren in your local area, then head for a sturdy shelter immediately.

During a tornado situation, your County 911 dispatchers will be very busy dispatching emergency information. Therefore, you may want to think twice

about calling 911 and asking them why the sirens are activated. You would already know a tornado warning has been issued for your county if you had a NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards unit, or some other kind of electronic device that disseminates alert information. Needless calls to 911 will increase the dispatchers work load and make it more difficult for them to dispatch information to first responders for other emergencies.

4. Commercial pagers, beepers, and other electronic devices and computer programs. An incredible variety of commercial alert devices are available on the market...some at a very low cost or no cost at all. Ask around - a relative or friend or business associate may know of a device or program, or know of someone who does. ❖



## CITIZENS LEARN TO BE PREPARED

Explorer Post 500 hosted Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training at the Union Grove Elementary School that was exceptionally well attended.

The class, which ran on January 18th, 19th and 26<sup>th</sup>, trained 45 people in disaster preparedness, small fire suppression, medical treatment and triage, light search and rescue, terrorism awareness and incident command. Participants included local area fire & rescue, EMS, explorer scouts, nurses and other hospital staff, business members, and other community members.

The recent tornadoes in Kenosha County spurred interest in the training. Explorer Post advisor and Kansasville Fire Inspector Jeff Berard said that many first responders saw this as a valuable training opportunity. "This is a tremendous opportunity to help families from all backgrounds become better prepared to deal with emergencies and disasters."

For more information on CERT Training, please contact Linda Botts at [SEWICC@goRacine.org](mailto:SEWICC@goRacine.org) or (262) 636.3342. ❖

# 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Tornado Awareness & Spotter Seminar

.....A look at nature's most violent storm

Last September, a small tornado did minor damage in Racine County and just this past January, two tornadoes struck in Kenosha County, leaving widespread devastation in their path. Despite the myths and misconceptions, tornadoes and other severe weather do strike in Southeastern Wisconsin and we all need to be prepared! At this program, we will look at the Kenosha tornadoes and learn about storm spotting fundamentals, visual storm structures, basic definitions, terminology and safety. By attending the **TORNADO AWARENESS & SPOTTER SEMINAR** you will learn *how to be prepared at home, work or play.*



Date: **Tuesday, April 15, 2008**

Time: **6:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

Location: **Gateway Technical College  
Racine Building-Great lakes Room (Auditorium)  
901 Pershing Drive, Racine (parking is lakeside)**

Instructor: **Rusty Kapela, Meteorologist  
National Weather Service**

Fee: **None.**

**Space is limited. To register, please contact Racine County Emergency Management at 262.636.3513 or [lori.greenwood@goRacine.org](mailto:lori.greenwood@goRacine.org).**

**Sponsored by  
Racine County Emergency Management**

