



NOAA *Backgrounder*

When Seconds Count, StormReady Communities Are Prepared

To help Americans guard against the ravages of severe weather, the National Weather Service has designed StormReady, a program aimed at preparing cities, counties and towns across the nation with the communication and safety tools necessary to save lives and property.

About StormReady

The top goal of StormReady is to prepare communities with an action plan that responds to the threat of all types of severe weather—from tornadoes to tsunamis. A voluntary program created in 1998 by the National Weather Service's Tulsa, Okla. forecast office, StormReady provides clear-cut advice to city leaders and emergency managers and media that would improve their local hazardous weather operations.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation's seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

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Once a community meets preparedness criteria, outlined by a partnership between the National Weather Service, and state and local emergency managers, it will be pronounced "StormReady." However, before that happens, communities must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center;
- Have more than one method of receiving severe weather forecasts and warnings and alerting the public;
- Create a system that monitors local weather conditions;
- Promote the significance of public readiness through community seminars;
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding exercises.

A year after the violent tornado outbreak in Oklahoma and Kansas, and on the heels of last month's deadly tornado strikes in Georgia, John Ogren, the manager for StormReady at the National Weather Service, said the program could not have evolved at a better time. "As the public becomes more acquainted with severe storms and the often-deadly impacts they bring, the only way to save lives is through preparedness and communication," he said. Ogren added: "When the National Weather Service issues a severe weather warning, the goal of StormReady is to make sure

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everyone knows about it, they know what to do, they do it and live.”

Storm Ready Certification Process

An advisory board, comprised of National Weather Service warning coordination meteorologists, and state and local emergency managers, will review applications from municipalities and visit the locations to verify the steps made in the process to become StormReady. After the advisory board approves certi-

fication, the community will receive a formal letter, along with StormReady signs that can be displayed along its major roadways. StormReady communities must stay freshly prepared, because the designation is only valid for two years. The advisory board seeks to officially designate 20 communities each year for the next five years as StormReady.

For more information about the StormReady program, please visit the StormReady Web site: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready>. 