

# StormReady Toolkit For Emergency Managers

This Toolkit provides guidance for emergency managers and local officials who are applying for the NWS StormReady program. It gives an overview of the StormReady program, describes the application process, provides a sample of the StormReady application, answers frequently asked questions and provides resources and contact points to help.

## What Is the StormReady Program?

StormReady is a nationwide program that helps communities better protect their citizens during severe weather from tornadoes to tsunamis. The program encourages communities to take a proactive approach to improving local hazardous weather operations. StormReady provides emergency managers with clear-cut guidelines on how to improve their hazardous weather operations. StormReady guidelines may be satisfied by incorporating data/services provided by America's Weather Industry.

Nearly 90% of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related, leading to around 500 deaths per year and nearly \$14 billion in damage. To help Americans guard against the ravages of severe weather, the National Weather Service (NWS) has designed the StormReady program. StormReady arms America's communities with the communication and safety skills they need to save lives and property.

Many laws and regulations exist to help local emergency managers deal with hazardous material spills, search and rescue operations, medical crises, etc., but there are few guidelines dealing with the specifics of hazardous weather response. NWS recognized this need and designed StormReady a program to help communities of all kinds: towns, cities, counties, Tribal Nations, Universities and industrial complexes implement procedures to reduce the potential for disastrous, weather-related, consequences. To be certified as StormReady, communities must meet guidelines established by the NWS in partnership with federal, state, and local emergency management professionals. The StormReady program is intended to:

- Improve the timeliness and effectiveness of hazardous weather warnings for the public.
- Provide detailed and clear recommendations which will help local emergency managers establish and improve effective hazardous weather operations.
- Help local emergency managers justify costs and purchases needed to support their hazardous weather-related program.
- Reward local hazardous-weather mitigation programs that have achieved a desired performance level.
- Provide a means of acquiring additional Community Rating System points assigned by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- Provide an image incentive to communities, which once certified, can identify themselves as StormReady.

- Encourage the enhancement of hazardous weather preparedness programs in jurisdictions surrounding StormReady communities and counties.

StormReady is a voluntary program offered to provide guidance and incentive to officials interested in improving their hazardous weather operations. **Implied or explicit references to requirements are made with regard to the voluntary participants in the StormReady program and should *not* be construed as being state or federal mandates.**

## How Will Becoming StormReady Benefit My Community?

When your major roads display StormReady signs, residents, business owners and visitors know you are committed to safety and preparedness. StormReady tells the community that their emergency management staff takes safety seriously.

## What to We Have To Do?

To become StormReady a community or county must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center
- Have more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public
- Create a system that monitors weather conditions locally
- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

## How Do We Get Started?

First, fill out the written application in this kit and submit it to your local NWS office. You can find your local office online by county at <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/contact.htm> or in this toolkit by area.

Applicants with jurisdiction over a community and unincorporated areas of the surrounding county only need to submit one application. StormReady staff will use the combined populations to determine the right category.

While much of the application is a basic list of technology, you will need to provide a brief narrative describing preparedness and planning activities to help staff members assess programs such as your hazardous weather plan, emergency exercises and public safety programs.

Once your application is reviewed by StormReady Review Board, a team will arrange for a visit to your community to formally discuss the application.

## How Long Will it Take

There is no set time frame for becoming StormReady. Once you have submitted your application, the local board will review it, arrange a visit, notify you of any deficiencies or approve your office and recommend that your community be recognized. The process can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months.

## How Will the Public Know My Community is StormReady?

Once your community is officially recognized, you will receive:

- A formal notification letter from your local NWS Office Director
- Two StormReady signs suitable for display along roadways
- Authorization to use the StormReady logo in media releases and other materials
- Instructions for acquiring additional roadway signs
- Information concerning the notification of the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) for possible adjustment to insurance rates.
- Listing on the National StormReady Website and on national and state maps showing official StormReady sites: <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/communities.htm>

## How Long Does the Recognition Last?

Recognition lasts for three years from the date of the formal announcement. After three years, you are strongly encouraged to renew your status in the program. Renewal ensures you are maintaining the programs requirements.

## What Does the Program Cost?

There is no cost to apply to the StormReady Program. You may need to upgrade your emergency preparedness operation to meet StormReady criteria. Established Emergency Management programs may incur little or no additional expense.

## StormReady Web Site

- To reach your local NWS office go to: <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/contact.htm>
- National StormReady Homepage: <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/>
- Application Forms: <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov/apply.htm>
- National Weather Service Homepage: <http://www.weather.gov>
- U.S. Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov> (used to obtain the population of your County or Community. This information is needed to fill out your StormReady

application)

## **StormReady Frequently Asked Questions**

***Q. Can I hire a service provider from America's weather industry[Weather Industry] to meet any of the StormReady guidelines?***

A. Absolutely. You may use data and services provided by America's Weather Industry to meet the StormReady guidelines. The NWS is concerned that you are prepared for hazardous weather and is willing to interact with your service provider in the same way that we would interact with you. Your service provider may also want to talk to us about availability of local weather information to meet your needs.

***Q: What is the difference between StormReady and FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program?***

A: StormReady is a volunteer program which is separate from FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program. However, the two programs complement each other by focusing on communication, mitigation, and community preparedness to save lives.

***Q: Is StormReady a grant program?***

A: No. There is no grant money associated with being recognized as "StormReady". However, the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) may provide Community Ratings System (CRS) points to StormReady communities, which may be applied toward lowering NFIP flood insurance rates.

***Q: Will it cost my community anything?***

A: Any investment by the community will depend on current assets. Established Emergency Management programs may incur little additional expense, while others may require more of an investment. The greatest costs involved may be with upgrading a community's reception and dissemination infrastructure to meet established StormReady guidelines.

***Q: Is other funding (beside the NWS) available to help us become/improve our StormReady program? (i.e., government/private sector?)***

A: There are no direct funds available from the NWS. However, other government and/or private sector partners may work with your community to obtain funds that will help you meet StormReady guidelines.

***Q: Why is the NWS requiring me to do this?***

A: StormReady is a voluntary program, but we think it is worth our investment if we can save lives. The NWS recognizes those communities that are better prepared for weather emergencies.

***Q: I saw the StormReady guidelines on the national web site. Why does my local NWS Office have different guidelines?***

A: National StormReady guidelines were designed to establish the minimum requirements for the program. However, many areas of the country have very specific weather-related needs which local NWS Offices consider during weather emergency planning with emergency management and community officials. As a result, StormReady allows the creation of Local StormReady Advisory Boards that have the flexibility to create specific by-laws for their area. Local Boards can also modify National StormReady guidelines to meet their specific customer needs.

***Q: What constitutes a community?***

A: StormReady defines "community" as a group of people within a locality that have common social and economic interests with an infrastructure that supports the communication and education role of the National Weather Service to protect lives and property. References to "community" in this document include cities, towns, universities, Indian Nations, and government and private entities. References to "county" includes parish.

***Q: OK, I meet the requirements. When do I get my signs?***

A: Once you meet the requirements, you are not far from being recognized as a StormReady community. You will receive two signs during your StormReady Presentation Ceremony. However, you will first need to send the application to the NWS. From there it will go to your Local StormReady Advisory Board made up of Emergency Management, the NWS, and other local/state officials. The board will review the application, and set up a site visit to verify the information in the application. If the board determines that you do not completely meet all requirements, they will make suggestions for improvement to help you meet all the necessary guidelines.

***Q: How long is my StormReady recognition good for?***

A: StormReady recognition is granted for a period of 3 years from the date your local NWS Office, Meteorologist-In-Charge signs your community's official recognition letter.

***Q: Where can I post my StormReady signs?***

A: Anywhere that you'd like too. Most communities have posted their signs in public buildings such as EOC's, County Courthouses, and Public Libraries, while other recipients have posted the signs on key roads within their community.

***Q: I understand that StormReady guidelines may be updated annually. Which set of guidelines will be applied to my application?***

A: The guidelines that are in effect at the time you initially applied will be used to evaluate your application.

***Q: What are the requirements for re-certification?***

A: Subsequent renewals require a community to go through the application process again. This helps to ensure that equipment is in place and updated, contact information is accurate, and allows for improvements to be made to the program using technological advances in communications and warning dissemination. Local NWS Office's will send a letter informing the community of the upcoming renewal date and direct them to current StormReady guidelines and applications.

***Q: I've heard of a program called TsunamiReady. Are StormReady and TsunamiReady the same thing?***

A: TsunamiReady is a companion program to StormReady that promotes tsunami hazard preparedness as an active collaboration among federal, state, and local emergency management agencies, the public, and the NWS tsunami warning system. The preparedness guidelines of the two programs differ slightly, but both are designed to improve public safety during severe weather and tsunami emergencies.

***Q: How to I order more StormReady or TsunamiReady signs?***

A: StormReady communities can purchase additional 2x2' signs from the Oklahoma Correction Industries (OCI) at a cost of about \$25 each, plus shipping. When ordering, ask for the "National Weather Service StormReady or TsunamiReady Sign" and specify whether you want StormReady COUNTY signs or StormReady COMMUNITY signs. OCI's phone number is 405-962-7007. Fax: 405-962-7022.

# *Are You Storm Ready?*



