

Opinion Editorial

SAMPLE OP-ED

This Week, Pledge to Be a Force of Nature

NOAA, FEMA Launch First National Severe Weather Preparedness Week April 22-28

This past year has been an important reminder to all of us that severe weather can strike anytime and anyplace. This week commemorates the one year anniversary of the devastating tornado outbreak in the central and southern states. *[Here, make note of significant severe weather disasters that occurred in your region. Or One month later, Joplin, Mo was tragically affected]* and already this year the country has experienced deadly severe weather from the west to the east coast.

Each year, many people are killed or seriously injured by tornadoes, *[specific risk in region – tornadoes, flash floods, severe thunderstorms in our area]*, despite advance warning. In 2011, there were more than 1,000 weather-related fatalities and more than 8,000 injuries nationwide. Severe weather knows no boundaries and affects every individual but that does not mean we wave the white flag and bow to nature's whim. It means now is the time for bold preparedness actions.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are doing just that and have partnered to highlight the importance of making severe weather preparedness a nationwide priority.

We all want the peace of mind of knowing that our families, friends, homes and our businesses are safe and protected from threats of any kind. And while we can't control where or when the next, *[tornado, flash flood]* or other disaster will hit, we can take responsibility for preparing ourselves and loved ones for emergencies.

As we reflect on the recent tragic weather we're calling on you to "*Be a Force of Nature.*" Knowing your risk, taking action and being an example are just a few steps you can take to be better prepared and assist in saving lives.

For example, *[include a couple examples of local people, businesses, or communities that have taken steps to prepare – or have successfully executed a preparedness plan during a disaster].*

Join us in becoming "A Force of Nature," and follow these steps to be better prepared for when severe weather affects our area.

Know your risk: The first step to becoming weather-ready is to understand the type of hazardous weather that can affect where you live and work, and how the weather could impact you and your family. Check the weather forecast regularly and sign up for local alerts from emergency

management officials and obtain a NOAA Weather Radio. Severe weather comes in many forms and your shelter plan should include all types of local hazards.

Take action: [Pledge](#) to develop an [emergency plan](#) based on your local weather hazards and practice how and where to take shelter before a severe weather event. Post your plan in your home where visitors can see it. Learn how to strengthen your home and business against severe weather. Download FEMA's mobile app so you can access important safety tips on what to do before and during severe weather. Understand the weather warning system and become a [certified storm spotter](#) through the National Weather Service.

Be a force of nature: Building a Weather-Ready Nation requires the action of each and every one of us. Once you have taken action, tell your family, friends, school staff and co-workers about how they can prepare. Share the resources and alert systems you discovered through your social media network. Studies show that individuals need to receive messages a number of ways before acting – be one of those sources. For more information on how you can participate, visit ready.gov/severe-weather

Pledge to be prepared and learn more at www.ready.gov/severeweather and [Weather-Ready Nation](#) and encourage the rest of your community to Be a Force of Nature.