

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 22, 2012

Over the past year, devastating storms have tested the fabric of our Nation. From Tuscaloosa to Joplin, the Midwest to Appalachia, tornadoes have leveled communities and left profound suffering in their wake. Thousands of Americans have endured the pain of loss - loss of a home, a job, a dream, a loved one dearly held and forever missed. Yet, as winds have died and rains eased, communities have banded together and demonstrated a simple truth: that amid heartbreak and hardship, no one is a stranger.

During National Severe Weather Preparedness Week and throughout the year, we renew our promise to meet a national tragedy with a national response. To help save lives, my Administration is partnering with communities across America to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards, including severe weather. We are working to improve the accuracy of tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings, giving individuals more time to get out of harm's way. And with leadership from agencies across my Administration, we are collaborating with organizations at every level of government and throughout the private and non-profit sectors to strengthen preparedness and build resilience.

Our Nation continues to bear the impact of severe storms. When tornadoes swept across southern States and the Midwest earlier this year, we were touched by the echoes of hardship. Many Americans lost their homes and businesses; dozens lost their lives. As we reflect on these tragic outcomes, let us recommit to doing everything we can to protect our families and our communities. I encourage all Americans to prepare an emergency plan and build an emergency kit with food, water and essential supplies in case of severe weather. When strong storms are approaching, it is critical that individuals and families take action to secure their safety and the safety of those around them. During a tornado warning, find shelter immediately and await instructions from local emergency management officials.

This week, we rededicate ourselves to strengthening personal and community preparedness before disaster strikes. To learn more about how to minimize risk before, during, and after tornadoes and severe thunderstorms, visit www.Weather.gov and www.Ready.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", with a large, stylized initial "B" and a circular flourish at the end.