



Press Release

Alicia Tate-Nadeau
Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2020

CONTACTS:

Rebecca.B.Clark@Illinois.gov

Chris.Miller@NOAA.gov

IEMA, NWS Develop Severe Weather Sheltering Guidance to Address COVID-19 Concerns

SPRINGFIELD, IL – As we head into the spring months, the risk of severe thunderstorms typically increases across the state of Illinois, including the risk for tornadoes. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recommended social distancing parameters, people who rely on public sheltering from tornadoes could be faced with the difficult choice of sheltering from the tornado in a community shelter or refraining from going to the shelter in order to limit potential exposure to COVID-19.

At this time, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service are recommending that your first priority should be to protect yourself from a potential tornado. However, the decision to open a community shelter will ultimately be at the discretion of local officials. Before you make the decision to go to a community shelter, you should first check with local officials to ensure they will be open. This should be done ahead of any thunderstorm, well before any warnings are issued. If you rely on community shelters, now is a good time to explore other options that might keep you safe from a tornado while also limiting your potential exposure to COVID-19.

The National Weather Service and state and local emergency management officials strongly encourage people to have a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All Hazards Weather Radio with battery backup. These radios can be programmed to receive alerts for specified counties to keep you and your family apprised of impending weather and post-event information for all types of hazards including natural (earthquakes), environmental (chemical spills) and public safety hazards (AMBER alerts). When an alert is issued for the programmed area, the device will sound a warning alarm tone followed by the essential information.

In addition to NOAA weather radios, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) can provide life-saving information about impending storms and emergencies. These alerts can be sent to your mobile

device without the need to download an app or subscribe to a service. Not only are these critical tools to surviving overnight storms, but they can be extremely beneficial for those who travel.

For more information regarding tornado and severe storm safety, as well as Illinois COVID-19 updates, please visit ready.illinois.gov

###