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Preparing for Severe Weather

The winter season is behind us, which means we get to look forward to sunny and warm days in our future. Along with those sunny and warm days can come severe weather in the spring and summer, such as thunderstorms, flooding, and tornados. Thankfully, there are excellent resources in place so we can be prepared when severe weather comes our way.

The National Weather Service has three alerts to warn you of potentially dangerous weather – “advisory”, “watch”, and “warning”. These alerts can help save lives! An **advisory** is issued when a hazardous weather or hydrologic (water event) is occurring, imminent, or likely. These are typically for less serious weather conditions. A **watch** means weather conditions are favorable for dangerous weather to occur. Just like the name, this alert encourages people to watch out for the weather and what it may do. This is a good time to evaluate your plans, including outdoor activities and travel. The last alert is a **warning**. This means that severe weather is imminent or occurring in the area. During a severe weather warning, people should take shelter as soon as possible.

How are these alerts issued? Our current technology allows multiple ways for severe weather alerts to be issued to communities. Weather radios broadcast information from the National Weather Service. In the case of severe weather, a tone alert is issued which is followed by the alert. Smart phones have the capability to push out notifications from weather applications. The National Weather Service website has a list of recommended apps. Whether you rely on a weather radio or your smartphone, it is important to remember to have them charged with back up batteries available.

Knowing what each National Weather Service alert means is a great first step to staying safe during severe weather, but having a safety plan is the next crucial step. First, consider your family and household. Set up a contact list and a meeting place if you get separated during severe weather. Make sure each family member knows where to go, how long to stay there, and how to contact each other. Second, prepare an emergency kit. These kits should include batteries, flashlights, nonperishable food, water, first-aid kits, pet supplies, and a radio. Each severe weather event is different, so ensuring your family knows what to do will help them to stay as safe as possible.

For more information on severe weather and how to prepare, visit the National Weather Service website at www.weather.gov/safety and www.ready.gov.