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CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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STATE WIDE OUTDOOR SIREN TEST SCHEDULED WEDNESDAY

Know the difference between Watch and Warning, and be ready to take action

MUSCATINE, Iowa – The silence of what is forecasted to be a sunny spring morning will be briefly interrupted throughout Iowa Wednesday (March 27) as the annual statewide tornado drill will be conducted.

Brian Wright, Muscatine County Emergency Management director, said that the drill will begin at 10 a.m. Wednesday when a test watch will be issued by the National Weather Service. That will be followed at 10:15 a.m. with the outdoor siren test.

“In Muscatine County the outdoor warning sirens will be activated,” Wright said. “Everyone, no matter who you are and where you are, are strongly encouraged to participate in this drill.”

All outdoor sirens located in Atalissa, Conesville, Fruitland, Muscatine, Nichols, West Liberty, and Wilton will be turned on to confirm that they are in working order. In a true emergency, the sirens are activated county-wide and run for a full three minutes. There is NO all clear signal.

Normally the sirens are tested at 11 a.m. on the first Monday of each month (April-October) unless a severe weather watch or warning is in effect on a scheduled test day. The rain date for the drill is Thursday, March 28, or Friday, March 29, depending on the weather.

“The drill can be postponed by the National Weather Service if severe weather is threatening other parts of the state since this is a state-wide drill,” Wright said. “We do not want to confuse anyone with a test if there is a true threat to life or property, and we want citizens to take immediate action to protect themselves.”

The outdoor warning sirens are activated in order to communicate to the public a safety issue. Sirens are sounded for tornadoes and severe thunderstorms as well as other non-weather related events such as a large hazardous material release or a terrorist threat.

Activation of the outdoor warning sirens occur when the National Weather Service (NWS) issues a tornado warning or a tornado or funnel cloud has been observed by a trained weather spotter. Activation also occurs for a severe thunderstorm warning when winds are greater than 70 mph and/or golf ball size hail or larger is reported by trained weather spotters.

When the siren sounds, seek shelter in a safe place.

“Now, prior to the drill, is the opportune time for individuals, businesses, churches, and others to review and update their home or facility emergency plan, and to train their families, employees, members, and others on what to do in the event of severe weather,” Wright said.

It is important for residents to become aware of the types of severe warning systems available in the area.

“Take advantage of this drill to test the written plan to ensure that what is on paper can be accomplished as planned,” Wright said.

There is no “all clear” tone sounded. Having a battery operated weather radio on hand is the best way to remain informed of current weather conditions and when the warnings expire. Viewing television stations or using the internet to track conditions can also be done while there is power available.

A list of links to area weather stations is available on the City of Muscatine [Severe Weather Page](#).

WEATHER WATCHES & WARNINGS

The National Weather Service (NWS) provides definitions for weather advisories, watches, and warnings covering a whole range of weather events. There are 10 winter/cold weather events defined by the NWS, nine for fog/wind/severe weather, and nine for flooding. There are also definitions for fire weather, marine, excessive heat, and tropical.

For the City of Muscatine and Muscatine County, advisories, watches, and warnings are issued from the NWS office in Davenport who use Doppler radar along with trained weather spotters in the field to determine what kind of statement to issue and when to issue that statement.

In general, an advisory is issued for less significant weather events such as strong winds, dense fog, frost, or winter weather, events that are more inconvenience than hazardous. A watch tells the public to be prepared as conditions exist for the development of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. A warning tells the public to take action as severe weather (thunderstorms and/or tornadoes) have been observed by trained spotters or indicated by radar.

Watch areas usually cover large areas while warnings are much smaller and indicate the area that will be impacted by the severe weather (thunderstorms or tornadoes). The NWS reminds the public that warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property.

The NWS definitions for advisories, watches, and warnings could be found at this link [Warnings Defined](#). Severe thunderstorm safety information can be found on this NWS [page](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions on the drill, outdoor warning sirens, emergency planning, warning systems, etc., can be directed to Brian Wright at 563-288-3909 or email at brian.wright@co.muscatine.ia.us.

The City of Muscatine also has a dedicated page to [Severe Weather](#) on their web site.