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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MUSCOM TO PARTICIPATE IN STATE TORNADO DRILL

Severe Weather Awareness week is March 24-28; Outdoor siren testing begins April 7

MUSCATINE, Iowa - The Muscatine County Joint Communications Center (MUSCOM) will be participating in the Statewide Tornado Drill to be held in conjunction with Severe Weather Awareness Week. The Drill will be held at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 26. The sirens will also be activated in conjunction with this drill.

For more information on severe weather awareness and safety tips you can visit the National Weather Service Site at <https://www.weather.gov/dvn/>.

"The Statewide Drill gives businesses, schools, daycares and other facilities the chance to practice their severe weather procedures as we move into storm season," Chris Jasper, Director of Emergency Management/911 for Muscatine County, said. "I encourage all facilities in the county to participate in the drill. I cannot stress enough the importance of having a plan and being able to execute it during severe weather or any disaster."

Any business or family that needs assistance to make a preparedness plan can call the Muscatine County Emergency Management office at 563-264-7142 or email



ema@muscatainecountyiowa.gov to set up a time. More information on plans and preparedness can also be found at <https://ready.iowa.gov>.

MUSCOM, in conjunction with Emergency Management, will start the yearly testing of the Outdoor Sirens on Monday, April 7. The sirens are tested on the first Monday of every month at 11 a.m. during non-freezing months. However, if there is severe weather forecast for a testing day, the sirens will not be tested.

As a reminder to all citizens, during a severe weather event, the sirens are activated by MUSCOM when one of the following criteria is met:

- Tornado Warning issued by the National Weather Service;
- Tornado or funnel cloud reported by a trained weather spotter; or
- Severe Thunderstorm Warning issued by the National Weather Service or a report from a trained weather spotter that includes:
 - Wind 70mph or greater and/or
 - Golf ball sized hail or larger

According to information from the National Weather Service (NWS) most fatalities during tornadoes or severe thunderstorms occur due to falling trees or large branches. The typical threshold at which large branches and small trees break is wind speeds of 70 mph. Hail also begins to break windows when it reaches or exceeds golf ball sized hail.

"Muscatine County follows the guidelines that are set out by the National Weather Service," Jasper said. "Due to the possibility of extreme danger from falling trees and branches we will continue to activate the siren system for Severe Thunderstorm Warnings that meet that threshold."

Sirens are designed to alert citizens who are outdoors of an imminent hazard and prompt them to go indoors and seek further information.



"We encourage the public to tune into local media outlets or listen to a weather radio during severe weather and ask that they limit the use of 911 to emergencies only," Jasper said.

The sirens are a countywide system so if a warning is issued for any part of the county, the sirens for the entire county are activated.

"It may be sunny in Montpelier but if there is a severe weather warning in West Liberty, the sirens will go off in Montpelier" Jasper said.

Jasper also reminds the public that there is no "all clear." The threat is over when the warning has been allowed to expire.

Anyone that believes a siren is not working or malfunctioning can reach out to the Office of Emergency Management at 563-264-7142 or ema@muscatinecountyiowa.gov.