

Preparing for Warm Weather's Worst

Spring and early summer in the St. Louis region have only one constant: fluctuation. The temperature varies, delivering anything from frigid winter-like chill to thick, humid heat in the span of a few days. With the prime cold-to-warm weather switchover months, this time of year provides an open invitation for thunderstorms, floods and tornadoes. More so than any other time of year, residents need to be prepared for an ever-changing rotation of conditions, customizing their emergency preparedness plans and kits to tackle all situations.

Just two years ago, the St. Louis area saw firsthand how the constantly changing weather patterns can be devastating. But we also saw firsthand how being prepared and informed can save lives.

When the Good Friday tornado touched down in St. Louis on April 22, 2011, the EF4 was one of the [strongest](#) tornadoes to hit the area in nearly 50 years. Despite causing nearly \$30 million in damage and damaging more than [2,700 homes and buildings](#), there was not a single fatality. While some may chalk such a miracle to luck or perhaps divine intervention, the power of preparation cannot be ignored.

When the forecasters took over the airwaves the afternoon April 22nd, people stopped and read or listened. When emergency management officials sounded the sirens, residents took cover in basements. When Busch Stadium officials saw the radar, they ushered attendees to shelter. All of these actions are examples of how residents, business leaders and community officials all can take it upon themselves to plan and act. And how it can save lives.

As the St. Louis area continues to move through this year's severe weather season, preparedness and planning will continue to be critical to saving lives, as the recent tornado in Hazelwood demonstrated. While the constant fluctuation in St. Louis makes predicting when the next tornado or severe storm will strike hard to say, St. Louis area residents can be confident that it is not a matter of if, but when.

So take time this season to pack that emergency kit for the next time you have to take cover in the basement. Talk with your neighbors to make sure you are checking in on one another to ensure that everyone is informed and safe when severe weather is threatening. This is particularly important for those living with disabilities or those who may have unique needs.

Find out what you can do to make yourself and your loved ones better prepared today for severe weather that may occur tomorrow.

Preparedness Spotlight

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

There are Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) all over Missouri, Illinois and the greater United States. CERT is made up of 2,200 registered teams of volunteers who assist law enforcement in any number of community emergencies. And these active citizens are making a big difference all across the St. Louis area. In Missouri, a St. Charles County teen CERT member safely [rescued an elderly woman from a fire](#).

CERT offers a 20-30 hour comprehensive training course that covers the subject of disaster preparedness through fire safety, psychology and basic medical assistance. Participants learn how to prevent and manage emergencies and their potentially disastrous aftermath so that they can provide support to professional responders when necessary.

These exceptional teams of community volunteers are a perfect example of how you can take the message of personal preparedness and share it, making a difference in your community. If you would like more information about how to get involved with a Community Emergency Response Team in your area, visit fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams.

Did you know...?

... these **shocking** facts about lightning and thunderstorms?

Thunderstorms can be ubiquitous in late spring and throughout the summer, and they frequently bring lightning with them. Here are some tips about lightning:

- Stay out of the shower and away from the sinks. The electrical charge often travels through the plumbing.
- Know the 30/30 Lightning Safety Rule: If you see lightning and you cannot count to 30 before you hear the thunder, go indoors.
- Learn and understand how to connect or start backup power for any essential medical equipment.
- If you are outdoors in a lightning storm and you feel your hair stand up, then squat low to the ground on the balls of your feet, making yourself the smallest target possible. DO NOT lie flat on the ground.
- If you are vision or hearing impaired and unable to use a TV or radio, ensure that someone will convey emergency information to you in an accessible manner.
- Lightning strike victims carry no electrical charge and should be attended to immediately.

Seasonal Overview

After a long, cold winter that seemed to overstay its welcome, it's easy to feel carefree as the grass returns to its verdant green and flowers begin blooming, but it's important to be prepared for whatever severe weather may come your way – especially living in the St. Louis area. Thunderstorms tend to bring power loss, lightning and tornadoes. [Making a plan](#) ahead of time and [packing a seasonal kit](#) can help you and your family stay safe.

Preparedness is all about staying informed, practicing emergency plans, and using your head. When a disaster is at your doorstep, you need to think fast. [One family in Concord, Georgia](#) made sure to protect their heads when they found their house in a tornado zone. Grabbing their motorcycle jackets and helmets, they packed into a small closet with their pet dog and three cats. The helmets were a smart split-second decision, protecting the family from the flying debris that

spun around the house. The father's boat was smashed and the shed was moved from its foundation, but all family members were safe.

One thing you can expect with any spring or summer thunderstorm is power loss. First, turn off and unplug all appliances that you were using when the power went out. Turn out all of the lights but one so that you can tell when the power comes back on. If you use a motorized wheelchair, then make sure you have a light-weight manual chair for emergencies. This will make transporting the wheelchair much easier.

For food or medication that needs to be kept at decreased temperatures, keep a cooler and ice in your house so that food stays edible and medicines remain effective. An unopened fridge will keep food cold for about 4 hours, and a half-full freezer will keep food cold for 24 hours. Once food sources have been exposed to 40 degrees for at least two hours, throw them out immediately and turn to non-perishable foods.

Stay Prepared for Tornadoes

This May marks the two year anniversary of the Joplin tornado. The memory serves as a reminder of how powerful and destructive storms can be and how important it is that residents are prepared.

But even with that horrible reminder, many residents overlook tornado alerts because they arise so frequently during late spring. Tornadoes are one of May's most treacherous companions, so be sure to keep informed about how to stay safe in your home or car in the event of an emergency.

Remember to take all of the necessary [steps](#):

- Practice periodic tornado drills so that everyone knows what to do.
- Discuss where you will take shelter. If you don't have a fully underground basement or safe room, then find the lowest interior room in your house. If you have trouble getting to a safe place, make plans with a neighbor to help you get to a basement or interior room in an emergency.
- Make a list of important information: emergency numbers, insurance numbers, list of allergies and medications, brief medical history, bank account number, emergency broadcast stations, etc. You may also consider making a list the brand, style and serial numbers of any medical devices you or loved ones use.

For the more technologically advanced out there, apps may be available for download on your phone or iPad. The American Red Cross currently has a [Tornado App](#) that provides a quiz on tornado knowledge and preparation, sends alerts and gives a list of tornado danger signs.

Want to share the All Ready newsletter with family and friends? Feel free to forward on to share updates on emergency preparedness information and activities in the St. Louis area.

Not on our mailing list? [Click here](#) and we will be sure to send you all upcoming editions of the All Ready newsletter.

If you would like to unsubscribe from future All Ready newsletter emails, you may [click here](#) to notify the All Ready team.