



# Rice County Sheriff's Office

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Rice County gears up for Severe Weather Awareness Week: April 7-11

In partnership with the National Weather Service (NWS) and Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), the Rice County Sheriff's Office – Emergency Management is urging residents to participate in Severe Weather Awareness Week, scheduled for April 4-11, 2025. This annual event aims to educate the community about potential weather hazards and how to stay safe during severe weather events.

"Minnesota's weather can change rapidly, and it's crucial for our residents to be prepared," says Joe Johnson Rice County Sheriff's Office – Director of Emergency Management. "Severe Weather Awareness Week provides valuable information and practical tips to help everyone stay safe during severe weather."

Each day of the week focuses on a specific weather hazard, providing detailed information and preparedness strategies:

#### **Monday: Weather Alerts and Warnings**

The week kicks off with a focus on understanding the difference between weather watches and warnings. A *watch* indicates that conditions are favorable for severe weather, while a *warning* means severe weather is imminent or occurring. Residents will learn about Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) and the purpose of outdoor warning sirens. In Rice County, sirens are activated by for tornado warnings, destructive winds (over 75 mph), and hail exceeding 2.75 inches. Sirens may also be activated during civil emergencies such as hazardous material releases. Sirens are one part of a multi-modal warning system; it's important to check other modes of receiving alert information when an outdoor warning siren sounds.

#### **Tuesday: Severe Thunderstorms, Lightning, and Hail**

Tuesday will cover the dangers of severe thunderstorms, including lightning and hail. Safety tips will include seeking shelter indoors, avoiding open areas and metal objects, and staying out of water. Remember, "When thunder roars, go indoors!" Residents are advised to prepare emergency kits and stay informed through reliable weather sources.

#### **Wednesday: Floods and Flash Floods**

Flooding is Minnesota's most common natural hazard, and Wednesday's focus will highlight its dangers. Rice County experienced significant flooding in 2024, resulting in over \$2.5 million in public infrastructure damage. Safety tips will include avoiding driving through flooded roads ("Turn Around, Don't Drown!"), understanding flood insurance, and proper cleanup procedures. Driving around road closed barricades is illegal and dangerous.

#### **Thursday: Tornado Drill Day**

Thursday is dedicated to tornado safety, featuring statewide tornado drills at 1:45 and 6:45 p.m. Residents are encouraged to practice their tornado safety plans at home and work. The difference between tornado watches and warnings will be reviewed, and safety tips like seeking shelter in basements or interior rooms will be emphasized. Rice County has seen several tornadoes in recent years, highlighting the importance of preparedness.

#### **Friday: Extreme Heat**

The week concludes with a focus on the dangers of extreme heat. Residents will learn to recognize heat-related emergencies like heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke. Safety tips will include staying hydrated, seeking air-conditioned spaces, limiting outdoor activity during peak hours, and never leaving children or pets in vehicles. Checking on vulnerable neighbors is also stressed.

The Rice County Sheriff's Office – Emergency Management urges all residents to participate in Severe Weather Awareness Week and take the necessary steps to protect themselves and their families. By staying informed and prepared, residents can minimize the impact of severe weather events. For more information, visit the Rice County Emergency Management website or the NWS and HSEM websites.

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