



PRESS RELEASE

215 SYCAMORE STREET
MUSCATINE, IA 52761
PH. (563) 264-1550

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For more information contact:

Kevin Jenison
Communication Manager
Public Information Officer
Muscatine City Hall
(563) 264-1550
kjenison@muscatineiowa.gov

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE OUTDOOR WARNING SIREN SOUNDS

Get inside and get information – sirens just one element of notification system

MUSCATINE Iowa – The outdoor warning sirens were activated in Muscatine County Friday night when radar indicated circulation indicative of a funnel cloud in the northern part of Muscatine County as a line of severe weather moved through the county. Although two tornadoes were reported in Scott County, none were reported to have touched down in Muscatine County.



The outdoor warning sirens are a system intended to notify residents outside of their homes or places of business that severe weather is imminent. It is just one part of a multi-layered system to alert residents of potential life-threatening storms. Other parts include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather Radio (NWR), broadcast radio, television, and cable providers that use the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) systems, telephonic notification services, and digital message boards along highways.



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“When you hear the outdoor warning sirens, it is time to move indoors and check local media for further information,” Jerry Ewers, Muscatine Fire Chief, said. “The sirens are just one part of a larger notification system.”

One device, just as important to safety in the home as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, is a NOAA All Hazards alert radio that can notify residents INSIDE their home to severe weather watches and warnings, civil emergencies, and amber alerts. These units, especially battery powered ones, are vital whether residents are in various locations inside the home or have moved to a place of safety within the home.

According to the Iowa Emergency Management Association (IEMA) the sole purpose of outdoor warning sirens is for the protection of life. Hearing an outdoor warning siren is a call to take immediate life-saving action and the most desired individual action is to take shelter.

“Get inside and then get information” is the recommendation of emergency management professionals.

Muscatine County offers alert notification through [ALERT IOWA](#), a mass notification and emergency messaging system hosted by the Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management Department. Residents can sign up for the types of alerts they would like to receive and select the best way to receive those messages.

The Muscatine County Emergency Management Association highly recommends that residents keep a weather radio with a battery backup in their homes for use during times of inclement weather.

The standard operating procedure for activation of the outdoor sirens includes:

- The sirens are activated for severe thunderstorms when the NWS issues a severe thunderstorm warning or a trained spotter reports winds of 70 mph or greater and/or golf ball size hail or larger. Hail begins to break windows when it reaches or exceeds golf ball



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size and winds of 70 mph or greater are enough to break large branches and small trees.

- The sirens are activated for tornadoes when the NWS issues a tornado warning and/or a trained spotter reports a tornado or funnel cloud.
- The sirens can also be activated for non-weather emergencies (hazmat incident, terrorism, nuclear emergency, etc.) that pose a threat to those who are outdoors and require action to protect life.

When the NWS issues a severe thunderstorm watch or a tornado watch, it is a notification to residents that conditions exist that severe weather is possible and residents should be prepared if a warning is issued. If the sirens sound ... get inside and get informed.

“We have a county wide warning system so although the weather may be fine in one area, it could be quite the opposite in another,” Ewers said. “Never dismiss the sirens and always seek information of where the storms are.”

A severe thunderstorm watch means “Be Prepared” as conditions are favorable for a severe thunderstorm to form, so tune in to forecast updates, monitor sky conditions, and know where to take shelter if needed.

A severe thunderstorm warning means “Take Action!” and take shelter immediately as a severe thunderstorm is happening or about to happen.

Severe thunderstorms produce damaging wind and/or large hail. If a warning is issued, take shelter in a sturdy structure away from windows (a basement or cellar would be best). Being inside a hard-topped vehicle is safer than being outside. Thunderstorms also produce lightning that kill an average of 30 people every year.

A tornado watch means “Be Prepared” as a tornado is possible. Know your safe place (storm shelter, basement, interior hall away from windows), and be sure to act quickly if a warning is issued.



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A tornado warning means “Take Action!” as a tornado is happening or about to happen. Immediately take shelter in your safe place. Do not dismiss radar indicated tornado warnings, especially at dusk or at night. Dangerous conditions exist for the warning to be issued.

Winds from tornadoes can exceed 200 mph with flying debris very dangerous and most often the cause of death and injuries. Seek a sturdy shelter in a basement, storm shelter, or interior room away from windows on the lowest floor and cover your head. Every tornado should be seen as life-threatening.

More information about the warning system can be found on the [SEVERE WEATHER](#) page on the City of Muscatine web site including when are the sirens sounded and what to do when you hear the sirens.

[FAQ – Outdoor Weather Sirens](#)

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