Severe Weather Preparedness Week helps us prepare for seasonal storms

Less than two weeks after the Lake of the Ozarks experienced one of the coldest spells on record and several inches of snow, we're preparing for Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

A statewide tornado drill was held Tuesday morning to test sirens (10 a.m.) and preparedness plans. Focus on preparedness continues through Friday, March 5.

Tuesday's tornado drill marks day one of Severe Weather Preparedness Week. The rest of the week is as follows:

- Wednesday: Lightning Safety Day
- Thursday: Hail/Wind Safety Day
- Friday: Flood Safety Day

"This is an opportunity for Missourians to practice their sheltering plans and ensure readiness in case of a severe weather emergency while at home, work or school," states Missouri's Storm Aware website.

As we all know, severe weather can occur anytime in Missouri. It is important to be prepared and have a sheltering plan in case of emergency. By practicing this plan, lake-area residents will feel more secure if disaster strikes, which ultimately could save lives.

To create a safety plan:

- Designate a member of your household to monitor weather by weather services, radio station news casts, or local television news
- Choose a safe area in your home, such as a storm cellar, basement, the lowest level, or interior room away from windows – keeping as many walls between you and the outside as possible
- Put essentials in your safe room
- Locate a nearby storm shelter
- Practice getting under sturdy surfaces and using your arms to protect your head and neck

THUNDERSTORMS No Severe Thunderstorms Expected	Lightning/flooding threats exist with all thunderstorms.	• Winds to up to 40 MPH • Small hail
MARGINAL RISK Isolated Severe Thunderstorms Expected	Limited in duration and/or coverage and/or intensity.	• Winds 40-60 MPH • Hail up to 1" • Low tornado risk
SLIGHT RISK Scattered Severe Thunderstorms Expected	Short-lived and/or not widespread, isolated intense storms possible.	• One or two tornadoes • Reports of strong winds / wind damage • Hail approximately 1", isolated 2"
ENHANCED RISK Numerous Severe Thunderstorms Expected	More persistent and/or widespread, a few intense storms.	• A few tornadoes • Several reports of wind damage • Damaging hail approximately 1-2"
MODERATE RISK Widespread Severe Thunderstorms Expected	Long-lived, widespread, & intense storms.	• Strong tornadoes • Widespread wind damage • Destructive hail, 2"+
HIGH RISK Widespread Severe Thunderstorms Expected	Long-lived, very widespread, & particularly intense storms.	• Tornado outbreak • Derecho

Color-Coded Awareness

The National Weather Service has developed a color-coded chart that reflects the potential for severe weather risk. See the accompanying chart.

- Thunderstorm (light green) – General or non-severe thunderstorms. Delineates, to the right of a line, where a 10% or greater probability of thunderstorms is forecast during the valid period.
- Level 1, Marginal Risk (dark green) – An area of severe storms of either limited organization and longevity, or very low coverage and marginal intensity.
- Level 2, Slight Risk (yellow) – An area of organized severe storms that is not widespread in coverage with varying levels of intensity.
- Level 3, Enhanced Risk (orange) – An area of greater (relative to Slight Risk) severe storm coverage with varying levels of intensity.
- Level 4, Moderate Risk (red) – An area where widespread severe weather with several tornadoes and/or numerous severe thunderstorms is likely, some of which should be intense. This risk is usually reserved for days with several supercells producing intense tornadoes and/or very large hail, or an intense squall line with widespread damaging winds.
- Level 5, High Risk (magenta) – An area where a severe weather outbreak is expected from either numerous intense and long-tracked tornadoes or a long-lived derecho-producing thunderstorm complex that produces hurricane-force wind gusts and widespread damage. This risk is reserved for when high confidence exists in widespread coverage of severe weather with embedded instances of extreme severe weather (i.e., violent tornadoes or very damaging convective wind events).