

May 2013

Subject: Severe Weather Watches and Alerts: Thunderstorms and Tornadoes

A **severe weather watch** alerts people that severe weather is expected or that conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather.

A **severe weather warning** means that severe weather is occurring, imminent, or likely in the location indicated and is a threat to life and property. People in the warning area need to take action immediately.

Severe Weather Watches and Warnings are issued by the National Weather Service.

When a watch is issued: A watch may be issued hours before a storm. The sky may be sunny when you first hear a severe thunderstorm or tornado watch.

After you learn of a watch, check weather information frequently:

While watches may be issued before storms form, thunderstorms may be developing when the watch is posted, or thunderstorms may be ongoing and moving into the area. By checking the weather information again, you will be aware of what is going on around you. Options for staying informed about the weather include:

- Weather radios
- TV news channels
- AM/FM radio
- Internet
- Emergency alerts via phone, e-mail or text

When a severe thunderstorm warning is issued:

Do not ignore severe thunderstorm warnings! Severe thunderstorm warnings often precede tornado warnings, providing you with extra time to prepare for a dangerous storm. If there is a severe thunderstorm headed your way, you should monitor it closely, especially if a tornado watch is also in effect.

Move inside and away from windows. Severe thunderstorms can produce damaging straight-line winds and large hail. It is important to move inside a sturdy structure and stay away from windows.

Monitor weather information continuously. In certain conditions, severe thunderstorms can and do produce tornadoes. Having a system in place to stay up to date on severe weather alerts is very important.

When a tornado warning is issued:

Tornado warnings contain information that lists the cities and towns in the path of a tornado. While the National Weather Service strives to provide the most detailed and accurate information possible, there may be occasions when your small town or community is in the path of a dangerous storm, but is not listed in the warning text. Be cautious

when using detailed forecasts of time and location. Because of the way radar works and how storms behave, these times and locations could be off by several minutes and several miles. Allow yourself plenty of time to get to shelter.

The key to tornado safety is to GET IN, GET DOWN, AND COVER UP!

- If you are outside, get inside.
- If you are already inside, go to the lowest floor possible and/or get as far into the middle of the building as possible.
- Flying and falling debris are a danger. Use pillows, blankets, coats, helmets, etc. to cover up and protect your head and body from flying debris.
- Do not open doors or windows.

For More Information:

New York State Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services: <http://www.dhSES.ny.gov/oem/safety-info/>

National Weather Service: www.weather.gov/safety.php

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.ready.gov

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/?n=safety-severe-checklist>