The recent storms that developed into over 80 tornados during the past few days have brought devastation across the Midwest and southern states killing 39 people. This is a wakeup call that Tornado Season has begun in North America. The NOAA Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma indicates the 2012 Tornado season could be one of the worst in history, even surpassing the devastating storms of 2011 that caused over $10 Billion in damage and killed 550 people. These somber statistics should remind all Seventh-day Adventist church and school administrators, pastors and teachers that now is the time to be sure your facility has a practiced Tornado Emergency Plan in order to protect the lives of church members and students at denominational facilities.
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Introduction

The recent storms that developed into over 80 tornados during the past few days have brought devastation across the Midwest and southern states killing 39 people. This is a wakeup call that Tornado Season has begun in North America. The NOAA Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma indicates the 2012 Tornado season could be one of the worst in history, even surpassing the devastating storms of 2011 that caused over $10 Billion in damage and killed 550 people. These somber statistics should remind all Seventh-day Adventist church and school administrators, pastors and teachers that now is the time to be sure your facility has a practiced Tornado Emergency Plan in order to protect the lives of church members and students at denominational facilities.

Know the Signs of a Tornado

Tornados can occur anywhere across North America during the spring and summer months often developing without advance warning. Administrators must keep in tune with local weather forecasts, know the tornado warning alarms in your community - stay alert to changing weather conditions and monitor the sky for an approaching storm or tornado.

Warning Signs:

- Strong, persistent rotation in the cloud base
- Whirling dust or debris on the ground under a cloud base – tornadoes sometimes have no funnel
- Hail or heavy rain followed by either dead calm or a fast, intense wind shift. Many tornadoes are wrapped in heavy rain and cannot be seen
- Day or Night – a Loud, continuous roar or rumble (like a freight train) which does not fade in a few seconds like thunder
- Night – small, bright, blue-green to white flashes at ground level near a thunderstorm instead of silvery lightning flashes up in the clouds may indicate power lines being snapped by the high winds of an approaching tornado
• Night – persistent lowering of the cloud base, illuminated or silhouetted by lightning or with a blue-green-white power flash on the ground underneath the storm

What to do when a Tornado Warning is issued or the Warning Siren is activated...

Tornadoes can occur at any time during the day or night and can often strike without advanced warnings.

• Do Not Panic – Stay calm and immediately move to a safer location and prepare to take cover.

• In an office building – Go directly to an enclosed, windowless area on the lowest level in the center of the structure. Keep away from glass. Stay off elevators. Interior stairwells are usually a good location to take cover and allow you to move to lower level.

• In schools – Immediately activate your Tornado Emergency Drill procedures. Go to an interior hallway or classroom. Stay away from windows and glass and avoid using large open areas like gymnasiums, auditoriums and cafeterias for shelter areas.

• In churches – Move quickly and orderly to an interior bathroom or hallway away from windows or glass. If there is no time to move to an interior area take shelter under the pews in the sanctuary.

Once you have reached a safer location assume a crouched, facedown position and protect the back of your head with your arms and hands. If possible try to cover yourself with some type of thick protective material like a coat or jacket to help shield from falling debris and shattered glass. DO NOT PANIC, say a prayer for the Lord’s protection and wait until the storm has passed before you attempt to leave your shelter area. Once you are outside, account for all individuals; provide any emergency first aid treatment.

Emergency Equipment & Prompt Reporting

• All facilities should have a 24 Hour NOAA Weather emergency radio at each location
• All facilities should have a First Aid Kit and Emergency 911 telephone numbers posted
• All Tornado Shelter areas should be clearly marked and known by all administrators and church leaders
• To report a damage claim to Adventist Risk Management, please call toll-free (888) 951-4276 – 24 Hours / Seven Days a Week

This is only a summary of Tornado Safety Tips. Learn more at http://spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/safety.html

Carina Franca

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