

Severe Weather Preparedness

Severe Weather Preparedness is crucial for schools to ensure the safety of students and staff. Here are some guidelines to help schools develop effective preparedness plans:

Before the Storm:

1. Educate:

- Know the weather risks for your area: thunderstorm, lightning, tornado, winter weather, etc.
- Recognize the difference between a **watch** or **warning**.
 - A **watch** is issued when conditions are favorable for a severe weather event, and you should have a plan of action.
 - A **warning** is issued when severe weather events are imminent or occurring and you should take protective action.
- Severe thunderstorms are storms can produce large hail and wind gusts up to 58 mph. They can also produce tornadoes, dangerous lightning, and heavy rain. This can damage property and structures; it is important to pay attention to the weather forecast.
 - Know what to do before, during, and after when severe weather strikes your area.
 - For information from the National Weather Service on severe thunderstorm safety, click [here](#).
- Lightning can be extremely dangerous during a thunderstorm. When you hear thunder or see lightning, go indoors immediately. Even though indoors is a safe shelter from lightning, it can travel through wiring, plumbing, and metal.
 - In order to stay safe and reduce the risk of being struck, avoid corded phones, computers, TVs, and other electrical equipment, stay away from plumbing or other sources of water, do not go near windows or doors, and do not lie on concrete floor or lean against concrete walls.
 - For information from the National Weather Service on lighting safety tips, click [here](#).
- Develop a severe weather plan and practice it often. Train all students and staff on protocols and procedures. Practice drills on a regular basis - [T.C.A. § 68-102-137](#).
 - Examine the layout of your school and external buildings. Determine the safest areas for students to shelter.
 - Students and staff should move to the lowest level and into interior rooms away from windows and exterior walls.
 - Use interior offices or other rooms, interior hallways (away from openings) and interior bathrooms for best protection
 - Avoid exterior rooms, rooms with excessive windows or glass.
 - Avoid portable classrooms and large ceiling rooms like gymnasiums, auditoriums, and cafeterias. Assume ceiling failures will occur

2. Notification:

- Have a good, dependable source of ways to monitor the weather.

- A weather radio, local radio and television, internet, and outdoor sirens are reliable sources to observe weather conditions.
- Have redundant methods of communication to notify students, staff, and parents of impending weather and when to take shelter and in case you lose electricity.
- Make sure everyone knows the signal of when to take shelter. This should be documented in the functional procedures of the EOP.

During the Storm:

3. Monitor weather conditions

- Stay alert of impending storms and weather conditions. Things can rapidly change, and you may not receive a signal or warning. If you see a tornado or severe thunderstorm, implement your severe weather plan and protocols immediately.
- When thunder roars, go indoors. Evacuate all students and staff off the playground or sports teams that are practicing outdoors.
- If possible, pay attention to things that went well or any problems that arose when taking shelter.
- If indoors, avoid running water or using landline telephones.
 - Electricity can travel through plumbing and phone lines.
- Stay away from windows and do not open windows or doors to equalize pressure.
- Continue to monitor weather conditions until any warnings are cancelled or thunderstorms have passed.

After the Storm:

- Assess the school building and grounds for damage.
- Provide medical assistance to anyone injured during the tornado.
- Communicate with emergency services and follow their instructions.
- Coordinate with district officials and parents to reunite students with their families if after regular dismissal times.
- Severe weather can be traumatizing, consider providing support for students and staff.

Winter Weather Safety:

Winter weather safety for schools is crucial to ensure the well-being of students, teachers, and staff during cold and potentially hazardous conditions. Here are some guidelines and considerations:

- When the risk of hazardous winter weather arises, it is essential to stay well informed on the storm's developments and predictions (freezing rain, sleet, snow, ice accumulations, temperatures, etc.).
 - Be aware of how the storm could impact your district and community.
 - This includes impacts on road conditions, campus parking lots, electricity, freezing temperatures, bus routes and more.
- Develop a winter weather emergency plan that includes procedures for early dismissal, transportation changes, and handling medical emergencies in cold or wintery weather.
- Establish clear communication channels for weather alerts and updates.

- Ensure all staff, parents, and students know where to find information about school closures, delays, or changes in schedule.
- Communicate any bus route delays or changes in routes to parents and staff promptly.
- Inspect and maintain heating systems, including furnaces and boilers, before winter begins.
 - Ensure they are functioning properly and have been serviced recently.
- Check insulation and weather stripping around doors and windows to prevent drafts and conserve heat.
- Keep entrances, sidewalks, and parking lots clear of snow and ice.
 - Use salt, sand, or other appropriate materials to prevent slippery conditions.
- Establish a plan for regular snow and ice removal, including designated personnel responsible for clearing pathways before school starts.
- Educate students and staff about the dangers of slips and falls during winter weather.
 - Encourage the use of proper footwear with good traction.
- Limit outdoor activities during extreme cold or inclement weather.
 - If outdoor recess or activities are permitted, ensure students are dressed warmly and supervised closely.
- Have a contingency plan for students who may be stranded due to weather-related transportation issues.
- For information from the National Weather Service concerning winter weather tips and safety, click [here](#).

Additional Resources:

[Severe Weather](#) - TEMA

[Severe Weather | Ready.gov](#) - U.S. Department of Homeland Security

[Schools Preparedness](#) - National Weather Service

[BE PREPARED FOR A THUNDERSTORM, LIGHTNING OR HAIL \(ready.gov\)](#) - FEMA

[Thunderstorm Safety](#) - American Red Cross

[Severe Thunderstorm Education and Outreach](#) - National Weather Service

[Children In Disasters Severe Weather Emergencies](#) - Centers for Disease Control

[Tools for Teachers](#) - National Weather Service

[Learning Resources: For Educators](#) - NOAA

[Safety Guidelines: Lightning](#) - Centers for Disease Control

[General Winter Safety Schools](#) - National Weather Service