



**For Immediate Release:** 03.20.06

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### **Be Prepared for Severe Weather**

Tornadoes cause an average of 70 fatalities and 1,500 injuries each year, which is why it's vital to know what to do when tornado sirens are sounded.

The West Suburban Consolidated Dispatch Center (WSCDC) is the emergency 9-1-1 communications center for the villages of Oak Park, Elmwood Park and River Forest. Center personnel are responsible for operating the *Outside Warning Siren System* (OWSS) or, as it's commonly called, the tornado siren.

Sirens are sounded if a tornado is sighted by a trained weather spotter, police officer or firefighter, or identified by the National Weather Service in a 10 mile radius of WSCDC member communities. This policy follows the practices of other 9-1-1 centers in the area.

If you hear the tornado sirens, follow these steps:

*If in your home or other building...*

- Go to the lowest floor, center room, interior hallway or a room without windows.
- Crouch as low as possible to the floor, facing down and cover your head with your hands.
- Cover yourself with some sort of thick padding for protection against falling debris.
- Stay off of elevators.

*If driving, follow these steps:*

- Get out of your vehicle and seek shelter in a sturdy building.
- If no shelter is nearby, run to low ground away from any cars. Lie flat and face down, protecting the back of your head with your arms.
- Avoid seeking shelter under bridges, which can create deadly traffic hazards while offering little protection against flying debris.

No "all clear" signals or announcements are made. The best way to determine when the threat of severe weather has passed is to stay in touch with a weather resource such as a local television or radio station or listen to the National Weather Service radio frequency. The National Weather Service issues an expiration time for its warnings. Once this time has expired, it is generally safe to assume that the severe weather has passed.

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Severe weather  
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Other than for a tornado warning, the sirens are activated at 10:30 a.m. on the first Tuesday of every month as part of a statewide test. The only time the siren wouldn't be tested as part of that program is if the weather conditions appear to be right for the generation of a tornado.

For more information on the Outside Warning Siren System, contact the West Suburban Consolidated Dispatch Center at 771.9110. For more information on severe weather preparedness, call the Oak Park Fire Department at 445.3300 or email [fire@oak-park.us](mailto:fire@oak-park.us). You may also visit the National Weather Service web site for additional facts and information on tornado preparedness at <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/#TOP>.

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