



## HOW SCHOOLS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE NOV. 4 STATEWIDE TORNADO DRILL

This year's fall statewide tornado drill is scheduled for **Wednesday, Nov. 4**. If there is a threat of severe weather on that day, the drill will be postponed until **Friday, Nov. 6**. Schools that are unable to participate on Nov. 4 may hold the tornado drill on another day during the month of November.

### BEFORE THE DRILL

Review your school's severe weather emergency preparedness plan with teachers, students and staff. Make sure everyone knows the location of safe areas where students and staff can shelter during an emergency.

The National Weather Service (NWS) – not GEMA/Homeland Security – issues severe weather watches and warnings. Be sure to contact your local emergency management agency to coordinate your school's access to local emergency warning systems. Also, inspect or install a working [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Weather Radio](#) at each school facility.

### ON DRILL DAY

For drill purposes, assume that a tornado watch is in effect when school begins and follow the steps outlined in your emergency plan. The NWS will not issue an actual tornado watch or warning, nor will radio and television stations activate the Emergency Alert System unless there is an actual severe weather event. Instead, at 9 a.m., NWS will issue its Required Weekly Test (RWT) on NOAA Weather Radio to simulate the tornado warning.

To determine when the drill begins, monitor the display screen on your NOAA Weather Radio for the RWT scroll. Some NOAA Weather Radio models sound a tone alert for a RWT, others don't. If your Weather Radio receiver doesn't sound a tone alert, begin the drill at 9 a.m. There will not be an all-clear message sent. The drill will conclude at 9:30 a.m. or whenever sheltering procedures have been adequately exercised.

### AFTER THE DRILL

After completing the tornado drill, file a report with the Office of the Georgia Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner on its [Schools Fire and Weather Report page](#) by signing in the same way you do for a fire drill. All fire and tornado drills that are conducted throughout the year may be reported online.

If a problem is identified after the report has been filed, contact your school safety coordinator, who will work with you to correct it.

The GEMA/HS *Ready Georgia* [Teacher and Parent Toolkit](#) is available to help educate 3rd, 4th and 5th graders and their parents about emergency preparedness. Lessons complement the health and/or science curriculum, giving teachers the opportunity to introduce principles of meteorology, earth science and heat energy while helping students take a proactive role in getting their families ready for a variety of emergencies.

# SHELTERING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

## **KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TORNADO WATCH AND WARNING**

- A tornado watch is issued when conditions are favorable for a tornado to form.
- A tornado warning is issued when a tornado or funnel cloud has been indicated by radar or sighted by a storm spotter. Take shelter immediately.

## **BEFORE THE STORM**

- Stay weather-aware: Monitor NOAA Weather Radio and media for your local forecast.
- Make sure you receive the NWS Required Weekly Test on your NOAA Weather Radio each Wednesday, and that the radio's back-up power supply is functional.
- Identify safe areas within the school with the help of local public safety and emergency management personnel.
  - The starting point for severe weather sheltering areas should be a classroom length from the end of the exterior doors in your hallways.
  - Select interior rooms or hallways in the lowest most interior level of the facility as sheltering areas.
  - Avoid areas near exterior walls, windows, doors or those with high, unsupported ceilings and glass, such as auditoriums, cafeterias and gymnasiums.
  - Do not shelter students under skylights, fire extinguisher boxes or electrical panels in hallways.
- Develop a system for informing students and staff when a tornado warning is issued. Using the fire bell can be confusing.
- Have a sheltering plan for transition times, classes in outside buildings or on activity fields, and the lunchroom. Check to make sure students on activity fields and outdoor classrooms can hear your alert signal.
- Make sure that each classroom has a map clearly marking the tornado safety area.
- Bolt down all bookcases, shelves and file cabinets before a watch or warning is issued to keep them from shifting during severe weather.
- Keep first aid supplies up to date and easily accessible.
- Generally, most storms approach from a southwesterly direction. Make staff aware of this pattern and identify the portion of your building that would be directly exposed in the event of severe weather. Ensure that all staff, including cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers and office personnel, know where to shelter during severe weather events.
- Ask your local emergency management agency about hosting a NWS Skywarn Spotter class to train several staff members on storm spotter techniques.
- Practice tornado sheltering drills at least twice a year, in the spring and the fall. Remember, there is a potential for tornadoes throughout the year in the state of Georgia.

## **DURING A TORNADO WATCH, OR WHEN THREATENING CONDITIONS EXIST**

- Continue to monitor NOAA Weather Radio and local media.
- Remind students and staff what a watch means and the safest places to shelter.
- Move students from temporary or mobile classrooms to the main building.

## **WHEN A TORNADO WARNING IS ISSUED, OR WHEN THREATENING CONDITIONS EXIST**

- Get to designated sheltering areas and have children assume the "duck and cover" position. They should be sitting or kneeling with their hands over the back of their head and neck, tucked into a ball.
- Take roll while moving students to the shelter area.
- Students should stay in the duck and cover position until the "all clear" is given.

Due to the unique features of some facilities, special considerations may need to be made based on the facility and/or its occupants. If you have any questions or need assistance with your severe weather emergency preparedness plan, contact your area school safety coordinator. Visit the GEMA/HS [website](#) to find contact information for your area school safety coordinator and local emergency management agency director.