

Prepare ahead of time for tornadoes, bad weather

In 2008, the National Weather Service reported a record of 187 tornadoes in Kansas.

With the spring storm season almost upon us, now would be a good time to take stock of your preparations for a storm.

When a storm strikes, you often have only a few minutes to seek shelter. It is essential for you and your family to be prepared. Safe Kids Kansas recommends becoming familiar with the type of weather you may encounter, preparing an emergency disaster kit and practicing your emergency plan frequently with the entire family.

Many people do not understand the difference between a weather watch and a warning. When conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, a severe thunderstorm or tornado watch is issued. That means to be on the alert because conditions are right for severe storms, either tornadoes or thunderstorms with hail, high winds and heavy rain.

Forecasters monitor weather radar, reports from spotters and other sources to issue severe-thunderstorm and tornado warnings for areas where a storm either has been spotted or indicated by radar. Warnings are passed to radio and television stations, and over weather alert radios. These warnings are also relayed to emergency management and public safety of-

ficials, who then activate warning sirens.

Safe Kids recommends assembling an emergency disaster kit in advance. If you need to take shelter, be sure every family member puts on hard-soled shoes and take your emergency kit with you. The kit should contain:

- Nonperishable food and water.
- A manual can opener if your kit contains canned food.
- Blankets or sleeping bags.
- A change of clothing for each family member.
- A first-aid kit.
- Prescription medications.
- Sun block.
- A flashlight and batteries.
- A weather radio.
- A set of car and house keys.
- A whistle to signal for help.
- A highway map to follow the storm.

• Identification and a credit card or cash.

• Any items you may need for kids, such as diapers or formula.

Other supplies and equipment may be needed for family members with disabilities or medical conditions.

Don't forget your pets will also need supplies, including food, water, collars and leashes. For smaller animals, you may want to have a crate or a cage to help keep them safe and close.

Another good idea is to des-

ignate an out-of-state friend or family member as your contact in case weather strikes while you are apart. Each family member should know the phone number, and call to alert others they are safe and where they are going to be.

Practice the plan often with your children, just as you do for other emergencies such as a house fire.

If a tornado warning is issued, your family should go to your designated shelter, which may be a storm shelter or a basement. If you are not able to get underground, then move to an interior room, hallway, bathroom or closet on the lowest level. If possible, get under a sturdy piece of furniture to protect you from debris, and stay away from windows.

If you are in a vehicle or mobile home, get out immediately and head to the nearest shelter. Do not try and outrun a tornado. If you are outside, lie flat in a low location, and cover your head with your hands. Do not take shelter under an overpass or bridge. Flash flooding causes more deaths each year than wind, so be aware of your surroundings.

After a storm has passed, watch for fallen power lines and structures damaged by the storm. Use a flashlight to inspect your home. Do not use candles, matches or lighters, as there may be leaking natural gas pipes or fuel tanks nearby.

Teachers can learn about area

Teachers may not know what to teach about northwest Kansas, especially when they are not from here and know nothing about the countryside or its history, but the Prairie Museum of Art and History has some answers for them.

"That is one of the reasons we are planning to set up workshops called 'Connecting Kids to Their Homes' for area teachers who want to learn more about northwest Kansas," said Sue Taylor, museum administrator.

"We plan to have these travel opportunity workshops for teachers from kindergarten through 12th grade during the month of June. We will tour various sites of historical interest throughout

northwest Kansas, such as Castle Rock south of Quinter, much of the area around Scott Lake and the Cottonwood Ranch east of Quinter, to name only a few."

Teachers will have a chance to take all of the tours or only one or two, Taylor said.

"We hope that by actually seeing what is here in our area and learning about the history behind

it," she said, "our teachers will be better able to instill a sense of pride about where they live in the children they teach."

Perhaps if children know more and are informed about the area, Taylor said, they will be more likely to return to the area after going away to college.

Call Taylor at the museum, 460-4590, for information.

Square dancers ready to twirl

The Shooting Stars Square Dance Club will have a dance from 8 to 10:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 1, at the Roosevelt Elementary School, 2000 McArthur, in Hays.

John Orlowski will be calling the squares. Everyone is welcome, singles or couples of all ages.

For information, call Opal Flinn at (785) 726-4432.



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