

TORNADO AND SEVERE WEATHER GUIDE

A. INTRODUCTION

BRCC's policies and procedures are intended to protect all members of our community while on campus and when participating in college related or sponsored activities. This guide is designed to help employees prepare for a tornado or severe weather event. Severe weather includes high winds, thunderstorms, lightning storms, hail, floods, hurricanes, extreme heat or cold, and other weather systems that have the potential to create safety hazards or cause property damage.

B. RESPONSE

If a tornado warning or severe weather system with the potential to cause damage has been issued, the following actions should be taken:

- Shelter immediately in the nearest hardened structure
- Use stairs to reach the lowest level of the building, and do NOT use elevators
- Take shelter in an interior space that has no or few windows
- Take account of your co-workers and/or students and attempt to locate missing persons if safety permits

If severe weather strikes the building in which you are sheltered and begins to produce damage, protect your body from flying debris with any available furniture or sturdy equipment

Automobiles: If you are in an automobile when severe weather approaches, get out of your vehicle and find shelter inside a hardened structure. For non-severe thunderstorms, hard-topped vehicles provide good protection from lightning.

Outdoors: If you are outdoors, try to find shelter immediately in the nearest hardened structure or building. If a tornado or severe weather forces you to abandon your vehicle or you are outdoors and are unable to find a hardened structure, take cover in a culvert, ditch, or depression and protect your head with your hands. *NOTE: All outdoor activities at BRCC should stop and participants should move inside or to a vehicle when lightning is within 10 miles of campus. Outdoor activities can resume 30 minutes after the last lightning strike within the 10-mile radius.*

Prolonged Event/Entrapment: If severe weather prevents you from exiting your work area, entraps you within a building or debris, or otherwise causes you to remain in place for an extended period of time, do the following:

- a. Remain calm

- b. Notify emergency personnel of your location and condition by dialing 9-1-1
- c. Ask for assistance or assist people who are injured or trapped by debris
- d. Provide First Aid and CPR if you are trained
- e. Attempt to locate an alternate safe exit. Do NOT attempt to navigate hazards
- f. Identify or be aware of live power lines, falling debris, hazardous materials, and unstable structures that may be hazardous
- g. Exit the area if it is safe to do so - otherwise remain calm and in place until emergency personnel arrive.

C. ALERT TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

A NOAA weather alert will contain information regarding the location and severity of the weather system. It is critical to understand the distinction between the types of weather alerts issued by the National Weather Service, and NOAA.

Flash Flood: A rapid rise in water occurring with little or no advanced warning, usually as the result of an intense rainfall over a relatively small area in a short amount of time.

Flash Flood Watch: Issued when developing hydrologic conditions are favorable for flash flooding in and close to the watch area. When a watch is issued, be aware of potential flood hazards and the topography of your surroundings. Low lying areas such as basements, streams, and retention ponds should be avoided. Those in the affected area should be ready to take quick action if a flash flood warning is issued or flooding is observed.

Flash Flood Warning: Issued when flash flooding is in progress, imminent, or highly likely. Those in low areas and near small streams should leave for higher ground. Water is expected to rise rapidly. Also, be extremely cautious driving, as low areas may be washed out. Information in this warning will include some locations where flooding is expected. Flash Flood Warnings can be issued without a Flash Flood Watch in effect.

Flash Flood Statement: Issued to provide follow-up information on any flooding that is occurring, including which areas will be affected.

Funnel Cloud: A quickly rotating cloud extending down from a thunderstorm that is NOT in contact with the ground.

Hazardous Weather Outlook: A statement highlighting any potential significant weather systems in the area for the next seven days.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Issued when conditions are favorable for damaging thunderstorms. Consider your shelter options and be prepared to take cover quickly if a warning is issued, or if threatening weather approaches.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: A damaging thunderstorm is expected. This means strong, damaging winds and/or large hail an inch or more in diameter (quarter-size). Tornadoes can sometimes form quickly in severe thunderstorms.

Tornado Watch: A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for the formation of a tornado and that tornadoes are possible. When a tornado watch is issued, stay tuned to the internet, local radio, TV, or NOAA weather radio for further information and possible warnings. Consider your shelter options and be prepared to take cover if necessary.

Tornado Warning: A tornado warning means that a tornado has been sighted or has been identified by National Weather Service radar. When a warning is issued, take cover indoors or in an appropriate shelter immediately.

Watch: A “watch” is issued when conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather within or close to the watch/listening area. The impacted area and length of a “watch” can vary depending on the weather situation and is usually issued for a duration of four to eight hours. During a “watch”, you should review severe weather safety guidance and be prepared to move to a shelter if threatening weather approaches.

Warning: A “warning” is issued when severe weather is confirmed by radar or reported by storm spotters. Information in a “warning” will include the location of the storm, the areas that will be affected, and the primary threat associated with the storm (e.g. tornado, high winds, flooding, etc.). If you are in the affected area, you should seek safe shelter immediately. Warnings can be issued without a watch already in effect.

D. WEATHER RESOURCES

- Weather.com: <http://www.weather.com/>
- Accuweather.com: <http://www.accuweather.com/>
- Weatherunderground.com: <http://www.wunderground.com/>
- NOAA/National Weather Service: <http://www.weather.gov>