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For Immediate Release

April 5, 2021

Wisconsin's Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week is April 12-16

MADISON, Wis. – Gov. Tony Evers has declared April 12-16 Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week in Wisconsin, and ReadyWisconsin wants everyone to take time to talk about weather safety with their families. ReadyWisconsin, the National Weather Service (NWS), Wisconsin Broadcasters Association, and Wisconsin Emergency Alert System Committee also encourage everyone in the state to participate in statewide tornado drills on April 15.

“Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are a frequent weather threat across the state each year, and it’s important that people know what to do when the skies darken and warnings are issued,” said Dr. Darrell L. Williams, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator. “During the statewide tornado drill, we ask everyone to practice their plan by going to their emergency shelter location.”

Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes annually. During the 2020 season, the NWS confirmed 20 tornadoes touched down in the state. While spring and summer are the most active time of the year for tornadoes, they can happen in any month.

To stay safe from severe weather, ReadyWisconsin encourages people to do the following:

- Create an emergency plan and practice it. Know where designated shelters are located at home, work, and school, and be ready to go there when a tornado warning is issued.
- Have multiple ways to receive alerts about approaching severe weather. Outdoor warning sirens, a NOAA Weather Radio, local media, and smart phone apps are all important tools. Don’t rely on any single source for important life-saving alerts.
- If you have a mobile device, make sure it is enabled to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts. On many devices, that option is available in the settings menu.
- Keep up to date on the daily forecast for your area. It can help ensure you are ready for potential severe weather threats.
- Create an emergency kit for your home, with supplies such as food, water, a flashlight, and first aid kit. Find tips for building a kit at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

On April 15, Wisconsin will once again conduct its annual statewide tornado drill. At 1:45 p.m. and 6:45 p.m., everyone is encouraged to pause what they are doing and practice going to their designated shelter location. If there is severe weather expected anywhere in the state on April 15, the drill would be postponed to April 16. If you are unable to participate at those times or need to stagger practices due to concerns about COVID-19, ReadyWisconsin encourages everyone to make time on the date of the drill to practice your plan.

“While the statewide drills provide a coordinated time to practice what they should do during a tornado, the most important thing people can do is exercise their plan when they can safely do so,” said Dr. Williams. “Even if you have to participate in a drill earlier or later in the day, we want everyone to spend a few minutes going over what they should be doing in the event a tornado warning is issued for their area.”

One change people may notice this year is the drill will not include a mock tornado warning issued as a live code test of the Emergency Alert System. As a result, there will be no test alerts sounded on NOAA Weather Radios. While some television and radio stations may break into coverage or display information on screen during the drill times, many may choose to address the drill during their regular local news programming instead.

Some communities may still choose to test their outdoor warning sirens during the drill times. However, it is expected many will instead rely on their regular testing schedules to ensure those devices are working properly.

In place of those alerts, you can expect to see messages from ReadyWisconsin and its partners across social media at 1:45 p.m. and 6:45 p.m. that encourage everyone to participate in the drill. ReadyWisconsin also encourages people to add the drill times to their calendar to remind them to practice their plans on April 15. Share how you’re participating by using the hashtag **#TornadoDrillWI** on social media.

“While many of the alarms people are used to hearing during the statewide drill may not sound this year, everyone can rest assured that those systems are still being regularly tested in other ways throughout the year,” Williams said. “They can have confidence that they will be ready to notify people about danger when they are needed.”

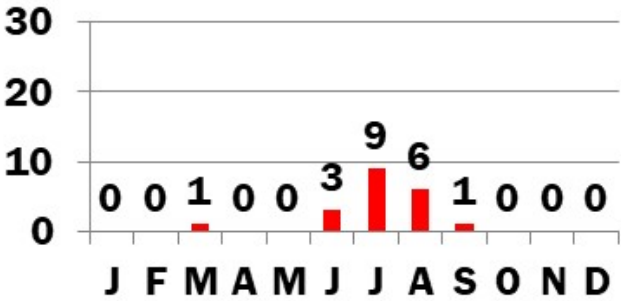
Gov. Evers’ Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week proclamation is [available here](#).

For more tips on severe weather preparedness and advice on creating your own emergency plan, visit <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>. You can also follow ReadyWisconsin on Facebook (<https://facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin>) for tips on emergency preparedness throughout the year!

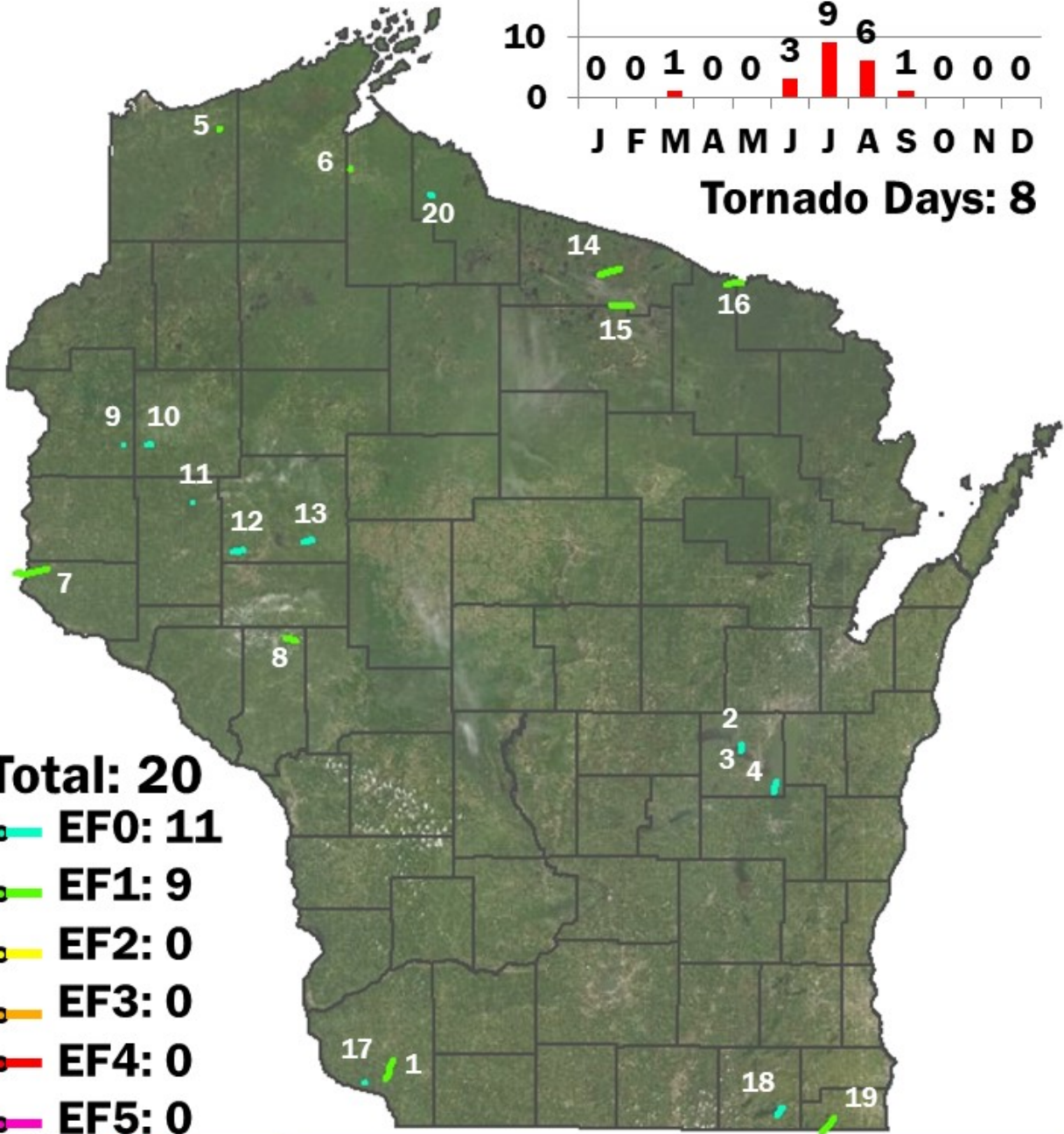
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Wisconsin Tornadoes 2020

Updated: 12/31/20



Tornado Days: 8



Total: 20

- EF0: 11
- EF1: 9
- EF2: 0
- EF3: 0
- EF4: 0
- EF5: 0



National Weather Service



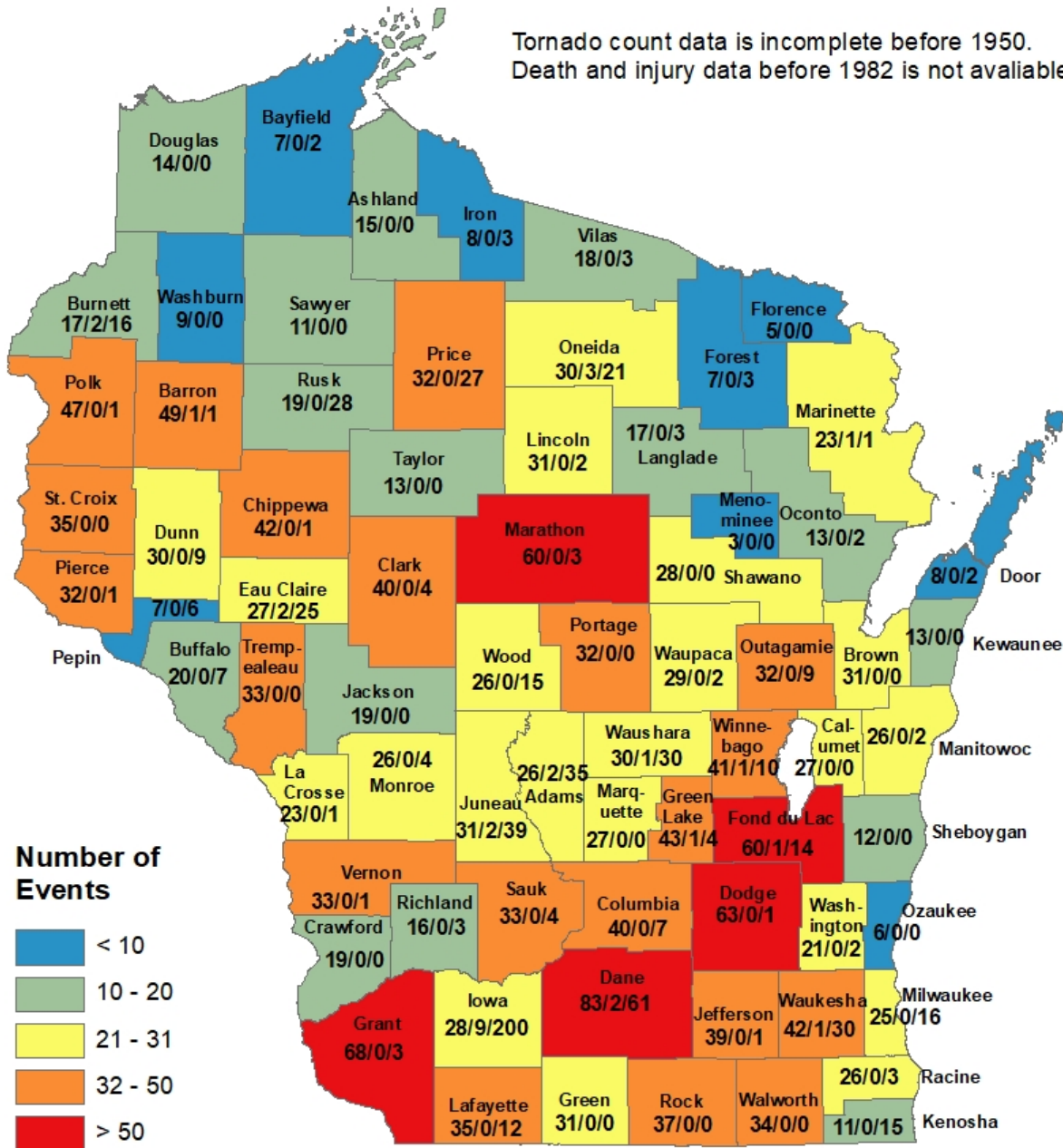
Wisconsin Tornado Events

1844 - 2020

Events / # Deaths / # Injuries



Tornado count data is incomplete before 1950.
Death and injury data before 1982 is not available.





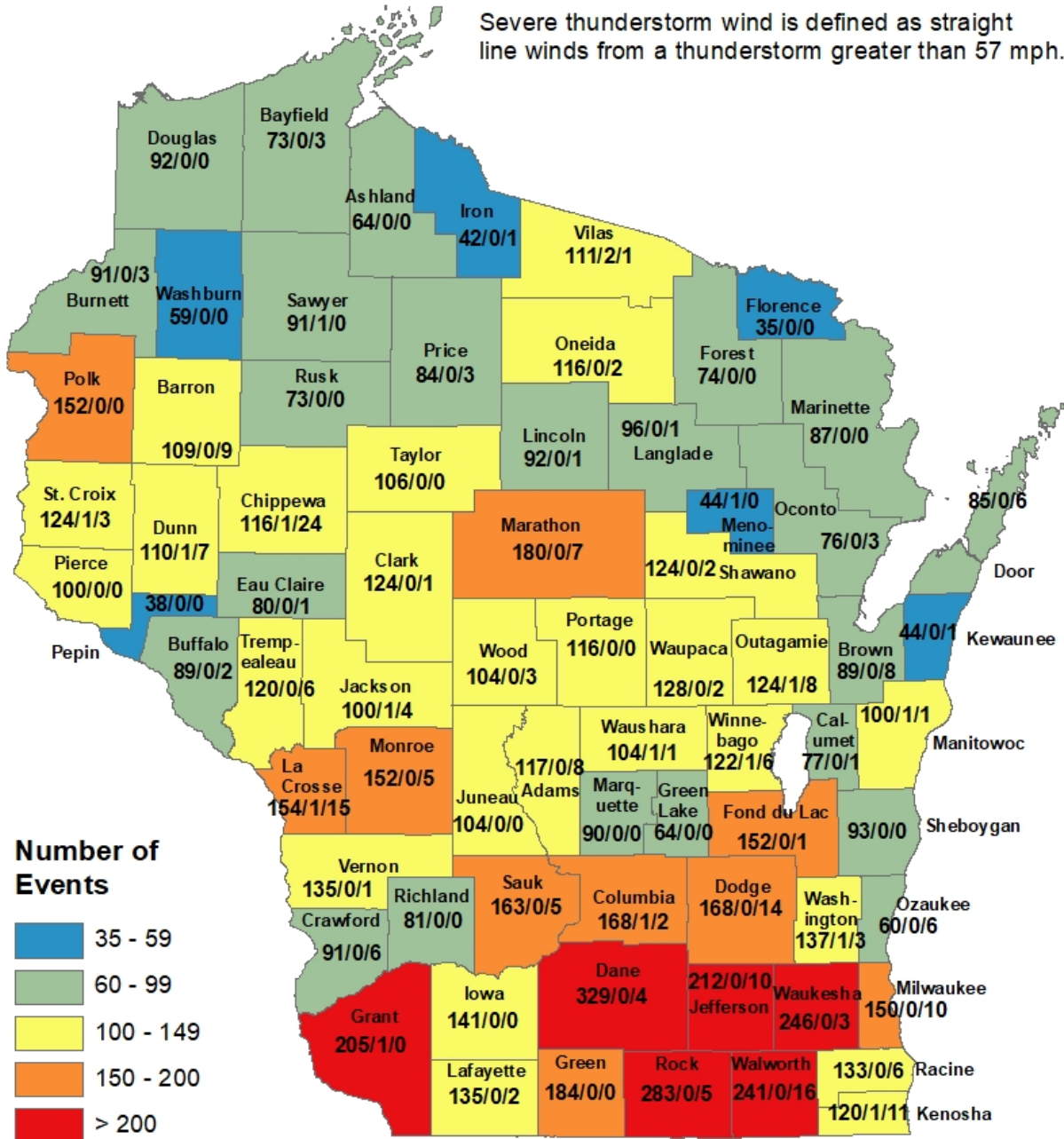
Wisconsin Severe Thunderstorm Wind Events

1844 - 2020

Events / # Deaths / # Injuries



Severe thunderstorm wind is defined as straight line winds from a thunderstorm greater than 57 mph.

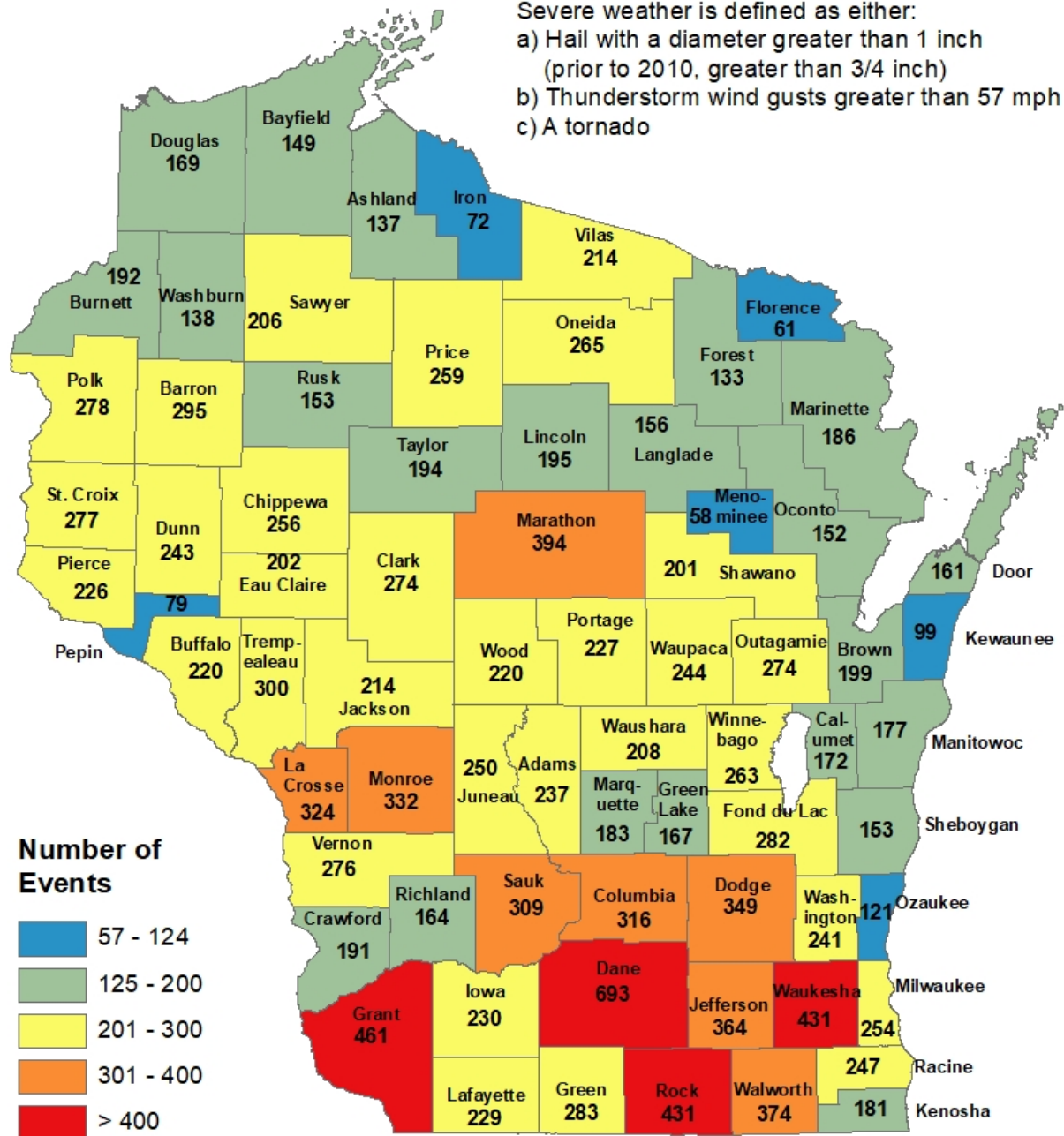




Wisconsin Total Severe Weather Events 1844 - 2020



Severe weather is defined as either:
a) Hail with a diameter greater than 1 inch (prior to 2010, greater than 3/4 inch)
b) Thunderstorm wind gusts greater than 57 mph
c) A tornado



Severe Weather Watches and Warnings

When conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, the National Weather Service (NWS) will issue a WATCH. When a Watch is issued, make sure you have a source of weather information in the event storms begin to form.

When severe weather has formed, NWS meteorologists will issue a WARNING to immediately alert the public and to advise them to seek appropriate shelter. **A warning indicates there is an imminent danger to life and property to those in the path of the storm.**

Watches and Warnings are relayed to local radio and television stations and are broadcast on NOAA Weather Radios. Public safety officials also receive warnings and can activate local warning systems, like outdoor sirens, to alert communities. You may also receive warning information on mobile devices.

Tornado Watch: Severe thunderstorms with tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. Be prepared to move to safety if a **warning** is issued. Know what counties are in the watch area by listening to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards or local radio/television stations.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Thunderstorms with large hail and damaging winds are possible. Be prepared to move to safety if a **warning** is issued.

Tornado Warning: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Move to a place of safety now.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: A thunderstorm with large hail or damaging winds has been reported or indicated by weather radar.

Tornado Safety Before the Storm

Develop a plan for you and your family for home, work, school and outdoors. Know the safest shelter areas in multiple locations.

- Regularly review and practice that plan.
- Keep a disaster supply kit in your home including water, food that won't spoil and needs no heat to serve, first-aid kit, NOAA Weather Radio (also known as an emergency weather radio), a flashlight and special items for children, pets and elderly family members.
- Be sure your weather radio is working properly. Spring is a great time to install fresh batteries.

Tornado Safety During the Storm

Whether at home, work, or school, it's important to have a plan in place for what to do when severe weather is approaching.

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement, and get under a sturdy table or the stairs. A specially-constructed "safe room" within a building offers the best protection.
- If a basement is not available, move to a small interior room on the lowest floor and cover yourself with anything close at hand: towels, blankets, pillows. If possible, get

under a sturdy table, desk, or counter. Put as many walls as possible between you and the storm. Stay away from windows.

- If caught outdoors, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If you cannot quickly walk to shelter, get into a vehicle, buckle your seatbelt and drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. Now you have two options as a last resort:
 - Stay in the vehicle with the seatbelt on and place your head below the windows.
 - If you can safely get noticeably lower than the roadway, exit the vehicle and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands. Do not seek shelter under an overpass.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes. You should leave a mobile home and go to the designated storm shelter or the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building.
- Make sure you have multiple ways to receive weather information. A NOAA Weather Radio, access to local TV, and smart phone apps can keep you informed when severe weather threatens.

Lightning Safety Tips

Lightning can be a major safety concern during storms. Know the risks and how to protect yourself from lightning strikes.

- All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. In an average year, lightning kills nearly 50 people in the U.S. Since 2005, lightning has killed nine people and injured at least 41 in Wisconsin.
- Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.
- If you hear thunder, you are in danger! Anytime thunder is heard, the storm is close enough to pose an immediate threat to your location.
- Have a lightning safety plan. Designate a safe location before the event starts. Have specific guidelines for suspending the activity so that everyone has time to reach safety.
- Prior to a practice or outdoor event, check the latest forecast. If thunderstorms are expected, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Avoid sheds, open shelters, dugouts, bleachers, and grandstands. If a sturdy building is not nearby, a hard-topped metal vehicle with windows closed will offer good protection. Do not crouch or lie down—continue moving to a place of shelter.
- If boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter.
- Do not resume activities until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.

Flooding Safety Tips

Flooding is one of Wisconsin's most common natural disasters, causing millions of dollars in property damage each year. Know the facts and keep yourself safe when floodwaters rise!

- Wisconsin had one fatality in 2020 that was due to flooding.
- Many floods occur along streams and rivers. You can determine your risk by knowing your proximity to the water and looking at flood plain maps.

- Urban areas have a risk for flash floods due to increased runoff from buildings, roads, and parking lots. Low spots, such as underpasses and basements, can be extremely dangerous.
- Dam failures have played a deadly role in the history of flash flooding. Be aware of dams upstream from your location. Earthen dams and associated embankments are more easily compromised by heavy rainfall.
- When camping or hiking near a stream or river, listen to the latest weather forecasts and keep away from the water if thunderstorms are expected. If a warning is issued or flooding is observed, move to higher ground.
- Do not attempt to walk or drive through a flooded roadway or intersection. Damage to the roadway may not be visible. Just six inches of fast-flowing water can knock an adult off their feet. Most small vehicles can be moved by just 12 inches of water and 18-24 inches can float larger SUVs, vans, and trucks. Turn around, don't drown!
- Beware of flooding potential along the Lake Michigan shoreline in the wake of a line of strong thunderstorms with high winds that move across the lake. The winds push water to the east shoreline, which then rebounds to the west shore as a flood wave called a "seiche."
- During times of heavy rain, those near areas with steep terrain should watch for rock or mudslides.

Stay informed with an All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio

Many people believe outdoor sirens will notify them when a tornado is approaching, however those devices are only designed to be heard by people who are outside. Make sure you have a way to receive notifications inside your home, school, or office by getting a NOAA Weather Radio. These devices act like a "smoke alarm" for severe weather!

- NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a public warning system that broadcasts forecasts, warnings, and emergency information 24 hours a day.
- Radio receivers can quietly monitor these broadcasts and will alert when important and life-threatening messages are issued for your area.
- "All Hazards" messages include:
 - Natural disasters (e.g., tornado, floods, blizzards)
 - Accidents, such as chemical release, train derailments, nuclear power emergencies)
 - Terrorist Attacks
- During an emergency, seconds count! These radios are a valuable alerting device, easy to use, and can also be used to check on every-day weather, including wind chill information during the winter. If your school doesn't have a weather radio, make sure to purchase one before severe weather season starts.
- Place weather radios in areas that are constantly monitored (e.g., school office, principal's office). Remember those occasions when the school is used for activities outside normal hours and make sure the radio can be monitored during those times.
- Weather radios are tested weekly. Make sure yours works!
- If you have any questions about weather radios, contact your local National Weather Service office. Many Wisconsin offices may have radios available for schools.

NOAA Weather Radio Home Page - www.weather.gov/nwr
 NWR coverage in Wisconsin - www.weather.gov/mkx/nwr

Education Communications Board map - <https://ecb.org/NOAA.html>

Wireless Emergency Alerts

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are weather and non-weather messages sent directly to cell phones in areas affected by an emergency. You can enable these alerts under the “notifications” section of the settings menu on most smart devices.

These short messages may look like text messages, but unlike texts which are sent directly to your phone number, they are broadcast to all phones within range of cell towers in the alerted area. The alerts will tell you the type of warning, the affected area, and the duration of the event. Weather alerts sent as a WEA in Wisconsin include Tornado Warnings and Flash Flood Warnings.

For more information on WEAs and a list of participating carriers, visit FEMA’s Wireless Emergency Alert web site: <http://fema.gov/wireless-emergency-alerts>.

For more information

Check out these web sites for more safety tips, the latest weather forecast, and other weather awareness information.

NOAA National Weather Service

<https://weather.gov>

Click on your part of the state for local weather information. Wisconsin has five NWS offices that cover different regions of the state. Find the NWS on Facebook and Twitter by searching for your local office name.

ReadyWisconsin

Web - <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin>

Twitter – <https://www.twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin>

Instagram - <http://www.instagram.com/ReadyWisconsin>

STEP (Student Tools for Emergency Planning)

<https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP>

Wisconsin Emergency Management

<https://dma.wi.gov/DMA/wem>

For Kids: Be a Force of Nature!

<http://weather.gov/grb/prep>

Tornado Preparedness Plan for Schools

<http://www.weather.gov/arx/schoolprep>

FEMA for Kids

<https://www.ready.gov/kids>