

Pat Quinn, Governor  
Andrew Velasquez III, Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**IEMA, NWS Highlight Flood and Tornado Safety  
during Severe Weather Preparedness Week**

*Preparedness guide offers tips for staying safe during severe weather*

SPRINGFIELD – Melting snow in the upper Midwest and Illinois combined with spring rainfall and very moist soil are predicted to increase the chance for flooding throughout Illinois this spring. With several communities still dealing with the aftereffects of historic flooding in 2008, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) are urging Illinois residents to be prepared for flooding and other spring weather hazards during Severe Weather Preparedness Week February 28-March 6.

“After a cold, snowy winter, most people in Illinois are ready to welcome warmer spring temperatures,” said IEMA Director Andrew Velasquez III. “But spring weather brings with it the risk of deadly tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and flooding. Many deaths related to these hazards can be prevented by following the safety steps we’re promoting during Severe Weather Preparedness Week.”

Velasquez said IEMA will continue highlighting severe weather preparedness throughout March as part of the agency’s 12-Month Preparedness Campaign. Safety tips will be available through the IEMA Facebook page and the Ready Illinois website ([www.Ready.Illinois.gov](http://www.Ready.Illinois.gov)).

Chris Miller, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the NWS in Lincoln, said people throughout Illinois need to watch for flooding this spring, particularly along the Mississippi, Fox and Rock rivers.

“As a result, everybody across the state of Illinois needs to take the proper precautions in or near flooded areas,” Miller said. “Never cross a water-covered roadway in a vehicle because it only takes 18-24 inches of flowing water for an automobile to be swept away. Over the past two years, nine people have died in Illinois floodwaters, and seven of those were in vehicles.”

Flooding is the number one severe weather killer nationwide, with about 100 people losing their lives in flood-related incidents each year. Slow-moving thunderstorms can cause flash-flooding, which is the most dangerous type of flooding.

Tornadoes are another weather-related danger that increases in the spring. The majority of Illinois tornadoes have occurred between April 1 and June 30 and between the hours of 3 p.m. and 10 p.m. However, tornadoes have occurred every month of the year and at all hours of the day.

Nationally, more than half of all tornado deaths have occurred at night. IEMA and the NWS encourage people to have a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Alert Radio with battery backup, a tone-alert feature and Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) technology. The weather radio issues alerts when a Watch or Warning is issued for your county.

Illinois averages about 43 tornadoes a year, although there were 52 tornadoes in the state during 2009. There were no tornado-related fatalities in 2009, but 27 people were injured. All of the injuries occurred as a result of tornado outbreaks on just two days: March 8 and August 19.

IEMA and NWS have developed a *Severe Weather Preparedness Guide*, which contains information and tips on how to keep you and your family safe when severe weather or flooding approach and what actions to take following a severe storm, tornado or flood. The guide is available on the Ready Illinois website at [www.Ready.Illinois.gov](http://www.Ready.Illinois.gov) or by calling (217) 785-9888.