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PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC
800 AM EDT MON MAR 02 2009

SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA
MARCH 01 - 09, 2009

STATEWIDE TORNADO DRILL 930 AM WEDNESDAY MARCH 4, 2009

This week has been declared North Carolina's Severe Weather Awareness Week for 2009. All week long the National Weather Service will be issuing informative messages to help you prepare for severe weather.

Each day we will cover a different topic. Today's we will define exactly what is a severe thunderstorm?

The last five years alone have seen a large amount of severe weather in North Carolina. In 2008 North Carolina ranked fifth in the nation with respect to the number of reports of severe weather falling behind Texas, Kansas and Missouri. Over the last five years there have been nearly 5000 reports of large hail and damaging wind statewide resulting in over thirty two million dollars in damage. Severe thunderstorms are also responsible for injuries and even deaths in the state resulting from lightning, high winds and tornadoes. The severe thunderstorm season in central North Carolina typically starts in March and does not end until late in the fall.

...severe thunderstorms...

The National Weather Service considers a thunderstorm severe if it produces a tornado, hail at least the size of a penny and or winds of 58 mph or greater. These minimum wind and hail parameters are the National Weather Service's warning criteria for severe thunderstorms. In 2008 warnings issued by National Weather Service offices provided an average of 19 minutes for severe wind and hail, up 3 minutes from 2007, with a detection rate of ninety one percent. It is worth noting that the National Weather Service does not issue warnings for lightning and given the deadly nature of lightning you should always be aware of the lightning danger anytime a thunderstorm is nearby. A good rule of thumb to live by is When Thunder Roars Go Indoors.

...large hail...

In the last 5 years severe thunderstorms in North Carolina have produced hail as large as tennis balls and even baseballs across the piedmont and eastern North Carolina. Just last spring golf ball to nearly tennis baseball size hail struck locations such as Asheboro...Lillington and Fayetteville resulting numerous damaged roofs, broken windows and dinged vehicles. While hail is not usually life threatening, these large

chunks of ice when driven by strong winds cause serious damage to roofs, automobiles, and crops. Hail season in central North Carolina typically runs from mid March through early July, typically peaking in May.

Hailstones grow in thunderstorms with strong updrafts. These strong upward moving currents of air keep the ice suspended inside the thunderstorm...allowing the chunks of ice or hailstones to grow larger and larger. Once the hail become too heavy for the updrafts to keep suspended...they fall to earth as hail. Thunderstorm updrafts which show signs of rotation on radar are very effective at suspending hail since the internal velocities in rotating updrafts are higher than those of non rotating updrafts.

...damaging wind...

Strong gusts of wind from a thunderstorm called downbursts or straight line wind are another serious danger. These gusts of wind rush down from the sky sometimes reaching speeds in excess of 100 mph. Thunderstorm wind of this magnitude can impact large areas creating widespread damage. Damaging straight line winds can even cause damage equivalent to that of a tornado.

Lines of well organized thunderstorms...called squall lines...Occasionally move across central North Carolina in the spring and early summer. These dangerous storm systems can be very explosive racing across the state at over 50 mph creating widespread wind damage over entire counties. Damaging wind events in central North Carolina typically start as early as mid March and run into August. Damaging thunderstorm wind events are most notable from May through early August which is much longer than the typical severe hail season.

...safety...

You can protect yourself during thunderstorms by remembering this phrase...hide from the wind and lightning. Stay away from windows when storms approach and seek shelter in an interior bathroom or closet when the wind really starts to blow. Your best line of defense against severe thunderstorms...is to stay informed. There are so many great outdoor activities across the state of North Carolina and severe weather can bring a quick end to a day's pleasure. Listen to NOAA weather radio, television or local radio for the latest forecasts and possible threat of thunderstorms and severe weather. If warnings are issued...take action and protect your family and property. Remember being safe is a lot better than being sorry.

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