

Office of
Sheriff of Beltrami County

Phil H. Hodapp, Sheriff

613 Minnesota Avenue NW
Bemidji, Minnesota
56601

Phone (218) 333-9111
Fax (218) 333-4271

PRESS RELEASE
APRIL 6th, 2011 - 2011 SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK PARTICIPATION

The Beltrami County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Management would like to announce their participation in the Severe Weather Awareness Week Campaign, sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Division of Homeland Security Emergency Management. The campaign for 2011 takes place the week of April 11th-15th. Each day will feature a specific weather hazard and a **simulated** tornado drill. Every year life and property are lost to the affects of severe weather. Beltrami County's participation in this campaign is to allow our citizen's the opportunity to take part in a tornado drill and familiarize themselves with potential threats and how to respond appropriately in the event of severe weather. Minnesota had more tornadoes than any other state in 2010, far exceeding states such as Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. There were over 100 confirmed tornadoes in Minnesota last year, including two in Beltrami County.

Monday, April 11th – Thunderstorms, Hail, Straight-line Winds, and Lightning. Thunderstorms can produce a wide variety of weather elements that can cause damage or injury. Hail causes a billion dollars in damage annually, and can fall in excess of 100 miles per hour. In extreme storms, hail can be larger than grapefruit. Straight-line winds associated with thunderstorms, can exceed 100 miles per hour. Lightning kills more than 100 Americans each year and kills more people annually than tornadoes. All thunderstorms produce lightning, and if you are close enough to hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning.

Tuesday, April 12th – Severe Weather Watches and Warnings. There are a number of different weather watches and warnings that can be issued by the National Weather Service associated with severe weather. Tornado watches and warnings, Severe Thunderstorm watches and warnings, Flood watches and warnings, and Excessive Heat watches and warnings are all possible. Remember **WATCHES** mean it is possible, and **WARNINGS** mean it is happening.

Wednesday, April 13th – Floods and Flash Floods. Torrential or excessive rainfall from summer storms can create flooding situations, sometimes very rapidly. Flooding kills 200 Americans each year, and in Minnesota floods are responsible for more deaths than any other weather event. Most deaths are blamed on people traveling through flooded roadways. Remember the slogan, "Turn Around Don't Drown!" Never drive through flood waters. It takes less than a foot of moving water to bring a vehicle downstream.

Thursday, April 14th – Statewide Tornado Drill. A **simulated** Tornado Warning will be issued at 1:45pm and 6:55pm. The second tornado warning is intended to allow second shift workers to participate and families to practice the drill at home. Families, Schools, Businesses, and all facilities are strongly encouraged to participate. Outdoor warning sirens will also be activated. If severe weather is possible on the drill day, the simulated warnings will not take place to avoid confusion with possible real warnings, but private parties are encouraged to still participate.

Friday, April 23rd – Heat Waves. Heat waves are a weather element many people give little thought to because you can't see it. Excessive heat can cause a number of ailments, including heat stroke and heat exhaustion. Learn to recognize these conditions and take appropriate actions when they occur.

As we enter the severe weather season, we would also like to remind our citizens that the outdoor warning sirens are tested the first Wednesday of the month at 1:00pm. During severe weather events, outdoor warning sirens are sounded when tornado warnings are issued and when intense thunderstorms with winds in excess of 70mph are expected. Sirens sound for three minutes, if the sirens stop sounding, do not assume the weather threat is over. Sirens are **not** sounded to signal an "all clear" notice. A NOAA Weather Radio with back up batteries is the best way to receive weather updates. Citizens should **not** to call 911 for weather updates, instead use NOAA radio, commercial radio, television, or internet for updates. The 911 system should only be used when there is a threat to life or property and for reporting in progress crimes. For more information, please visit: <http://www.severeweather.state.mn.us/>

Christopher Muller, Assistant Director of Emergency Management
Beltrami County Sheriff's Office
chris.muller@co.beltrami.mn.us ph.218-333-8386