

Pottawatomie County Outdoor Warning Siren Fact Sheet

Summer is here, Pottawatomie County would like to take this opportunity to remind our residents of the purpose of Outdoor Warning Sirens and actions that you should take once the sirens sound. The Outdoor Warning Sirens are designed to warn individuals who are outside of impending severe weather and to seek shelter. Outdoor Warning Sirens are not designed, nor should they be counted upon to warn individuals who are already inside a structure.

Pottawatomie County has 17 Outdoor Warning Sirens. In order to ensure the mechanical parts of the siren are working properly, we test the sirens on the first Monday of every month between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm, weather permitting. Each siren is visually inspected by County Emergency Management Personnel during this process. Sirens will not be tested if there is a threat of severe weather, freezing conditions exist or the sounding of the sirens may be misinterpreted. If the County does not choose to test the sirens because of the before mentioned reasons they will be tested on the next available clear day. Some County sirens are grouped and activated together for coverage reasons. This allows the County to activate the sirens utilizing the same radio frequency. By doing this it provides a better level of service for individuals in that specific area. In this instance it may not be uncommon for 2-3 sirens to sound at once to inform those outside. When activated, sirens are set to sound for 3 minutes and automatically shut off. They may be reactivated depending upon the weather conditions. Each time the siren sounds it is to inform the residents of danger. **NOTE: the siren will not sound for an all clear.**

The Pottawatomie County Communications Center is responsible for activating the sirens in Pottawatomie County. Sirens activated by the Communication Center are as a result of;

- a. A confirmed funnel/tornado spotting in a particular area of the County, or
- b. As a result of the National Weather Service issuing a Tornado Warning for a particular area of the County

Confirmation of a funnel cloud or tornado may occur through the National Weather Service, trained Law Enforcement Officers, or trained Weather Spotters. Remember, a Tornado Warning means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.

A Tornado Watch means that conditions are favorable for the formation of a tornado. The Outdoor Warning Sirens will not be sounded for a Watch. When severe weather events are predicted, the County Weather Spotters will be activated by the Communications Center and respond to predesignated positions based on the projected path of the storm system.

When the Outdoor Warning Sirens are activated, you should take shelter indoors in a basement, cellar, or the lowest level of the building. If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or room away from windows such as a bathroom or closet. Vehicles, mobile homes, shopping malls, and auditoriums (any buildings with wide-span roofs) are not considered safe shelter. It is your responsibility to have a shelter location identified before the emergency arises. If you are outside, lie in a ditch or low-lying area and use your arms to cover your head and neck to protect yourself from flying debris. Please tune to your local television or radio station for further information or alerts during the

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emergency. For inside notification it is highly recommended that residents purchase a NOAA weather radio. These radios are relatively inexpensive and can now be programmed for specific counties. When a warning has been given we ask that residents only contact the County 911 center in case of an emergency and not for a weather update.

Often times lightning, hail, and flooding are all associated with these storms. Prepare yourself in advance by discussing safety plans with your coworkers and families and know where to meet or who to contact when the storm passes. You may only have a short amount of time act so advanced planning and quick response are key to surviving a tornado.

NOTE: Sirens utilize complex electronics and contain numerous parts. Units may fail for various reasons; direct and indirect lightning strikes, normal wear and tear and so on.

When a siren is reported to have malfunctioned, such as activating on its own or failure to activate the County will notify the service provider as to the failure and once service is complete the unit is tested, weather permitting. If the unit repaired is one that is activated in a group of sirens all will be sounded in the test. If the siren is found to have functioning problems it is reported for repair. The sirens will not be activated more than necessary to avoid public complacency.