

Description of the Chatham County Siren Program

- There are 31 sirens currently located throughout Chatham County.
- The sirens have an effective range of 2 miles in diameter.
- At 100 feet, the sirens are heard at 129 decibels (the equivalent sound level of a jet engine taking off). At 1 mile, they're heard at 70 decibels (the equivalent sound level of a normal conversation).
- Able to conduct a weekly, silent test to verify the status of each individual siren. (If a speaker is out, low DC power, no AC power to the siren, rotor failure, etc, we will know about it and can fix it immediately.
- One of Chatham Emergency Management Agency's (CEMA's) goals is to install more sirens within the next five years to cover 95% of the County.



What the Public Needs to Know if They Hear a Siren:

- Each siren makes the sound of one long wail which is distinctly different from the short, repetitive wails of fire engine truck sirens or police car sirens.
- The Sirens are tested the first Wednesday of every month at 12:00 noon **only if** it is sunny outside. This testing program is designed to maintain a reliable warning system and to meet State and Federal testing guidelines. **In the event of bad weather, the test will be cancelled to avoid confusion.**
- The Sirens are used to notify people about ALL hazards (such as hazardous materials, fires, explosions, tornadoes) that would require the public to act to ensure their safety.
- The Chatham County Siren Program was designed to alert individuals who are OUTSIDE to take refuge immediately inside of a sturdy building.
- Once inside, monitor emergency advisories by listening to NOAA weather radios (strongly recommended), commercial radio or televised newscasts.

Specifics about Tornadoes

What is a tornado?

- A tornado is a rapidly rotating column of air usually descending from a large thunderstorm.



- Tornadoes are the most violent storms on the surface of the Earth.
- They have the highest wind speeds of any weather phenomenon.
- The strongest tornadoes are more intense than the biggest hurricanes, but they affect smaller areas.
- U.S. tornadoes typically move from southwest to northeast at speeds up to 62 mph, with rotating wind speeds sometimes in excess of 310 mph.
- Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm and are formed by three fast-moving air masses, all going different directions that impart shears in a thundercloud creating a rotation. Additional energy is received via lightning and latent heat released by rainfall.
- Tornadoes can occur at any time of the year but are most common in late spring and early summer.
- Wind damage from tornadoes is gauged by the Enhanced Fujita Scale:

EF-0: 65-85 mph
EF-1: 86-110 mph
EF-2: 111-135 mph
EF-3: 136-165 mph
EF-4: 166-200 mph
EF-5: over 200 mph



Tornadoes and Chatham County

- A tornado watch is issued by the Charleston National Weather Service when conditions are right for tornado development. There is still time to relocate to a safe area. During a tornado watch, listen to a radio or television for weather reports, and be prepared to take shelter if you hear a tornado warning.
- A tornado warning is issued by the Charleston National Weather Service when a tornado has been sighted or appears on weather radar.
- If you are outside and hear a Siren, get inside of a sturdy building immediately and monitor your weather radio, commercial radio and television for advisories and updates.
- If you are in a mobile home when a tornado warning is issued, get out and go to the closest sturdy building and monitor severe weather advisories by listening to weather radios, commercial radio or televised newscasts.

- Watch for the danger signs of a tornado which are dark, often greenish skies; large hail; a dark, low-lying cloud; or a loud roar, similar to a freight train.
- If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately in the lowest floor of a building or in an interior room or hallway.
- Get under a sturdy piece of furniture and put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Stay away from windows.
- If you are outside or in a car with no buildings in site, get out of your car and lie flat in a nearby ditch or depression and cover your head with your hands. DO NOT seek shelter underneath a highway overpass!
- For additional information on the siren program and emergency planning, contact CEMA at (912) 201-4500 or www.chathamemergency.org.