

Severe Weather Safety Plans and Protocols

According to the National Weather Service, tornadoes can occur any time of the day or night, and at any time of the year. In Oklahoma, peak tornado occurrences are from April to June and between the hours of 4:00 PM and 9:00 PM.

At times, certain weather conditions may occur which will necessitate the cancellation or delay of school bus routes, school athletic trips, extracurricular activities, or field trips. The following provides information on protocols and procedures adopted by the Ada City School District in the event of severe weather and/or tornadoes.

Know the difference between a "**Tornado Watch**" and a "**Tornado Warning**"

- A "Tornado Watch" means tornadoes are possible in your area; remain alert for approaching storms.
- A "Tornado Warning" means a tornado, in your immediate area, has been sighted or indicated by weather radar.

When a "Tornado Watch" is issued, the following procedures will be put in place:

When Students Are At School

- School administrators will routinely monitor the weather for any sudden change in weather conditions. In addition, the Superintendent's office and other District officials are in direct contact with the National Weather Service (NWS) in Norman any time severe weather is anticipated. This occurs through a live feed between the NWS and Ada City School District administration.

When Students Are On Athletic, Activity, or Field Trips

- When a "Tornado Watch" is issued, school administrators will routinely monitor the weather for any sudden change in weather conditions.
- If scheduled events are cancelled or postponed, arrangements will be made for administrators, coaches, sponsors, teachers, and/or students to make contact with parents to inform them of the changes.
- If a "Tornado Watch" is issued with sufficient time prior to scheduled departure times, activities or events may be cancelled or postponed prior to their departure. The possibility also exists that activities could be cancelled or postponed and students be required to leave a venue early if severe weather is likely to occur before their scheduled travel time home.

- **When a "Tornado Warning" is issued for our immediate area, the following procedures will be implemented:**

During the School Day

- All students, faculty, and staff will initiate their "Tornado Preparedness Plan." All students, faculty, and staff will move immediately to the Safe Room located at each school site. The Ada City School District is very fortunate to have FEMA Rated Safe Rooms at every school site. Each Safe Room is designed to accommodate every student, teacher, and staff member.
- Once inside the Safe Room, **no one** will be allowed to exit the Safe Room until District officials verify with appropriate authorities (ex: Emergency Management Personnel) that severe weather is no longer an imminent threat.
 - There is a misconception among many citizens that sounding the sirens a second time signals "*All Clear*," when actually it means we have another warning. Therefore, it is the District's policy that no one will be allowed to exit the Safe Room until District personnel can notify each school site that the severe weather threat is over.
 - Parents: Please take shelter as well and do not attempt to travel to schools during a "Tornado Warning" to pick up your children. Please allow us to use the Safe Rooms properly. Securing the Safe Room doors and keeping them secured until notified by District officials that severe weather is no longer an imminent threat is unquestionably the safest procedure for our students and your children during a 'Tornado Warning'.

At or Near Dismissal of the School Day

- If a "Tornado Warning" is announced at or near the end of the school day, students are to remain in their designated Safe Room and to follow the procedures noted above.
 - If a "Tornado Warning" is issued after school has been dismissed and buses have begun their routes, all bus drivers are to proceed to the **nearest** Ada City School site and students are to take shelter in the school's Safe Room. Students are to remain in the Safe Room until District personnel can notify each school site that the severe weather threat is over.
 - If damaging severe weather or a tornado **does not occur**, the bus routes will resume as soon as District officials can notify the drivers to continue their routes. Students will be delivered to their home or normal drop off location.
 - In the event that damaging severe weather or a tornado **does occur**, students will remain at their present school site location until the reunification process is complete.

- Once District officials have determined that severe weather is no longer a threat, staff members who are assigned the responsibility of collecting each student's contact information, will begin the process of communicating with parents to identify the school site where their child may be picked up.

During Activity, Athletic, or Field Trips (After Departure)

- If a "Tornado Warning" is issued for an area that affects the scheduled travel route, the bus driver, coach, teachers, and sponsors will be directed to delay their travel and be prepared to take shelter until the weather threat is over.
- If Activity Students are caught in a situation where severe weather forces an activity bus to be evacuated, every attempt practical will be made to access shelter in a pre-determined shelter location along the route.
- If a bus is caught in the direct path of a tornado, or one is sighted, and a pre-identified shelter is not accessible, the school bus driver and sponsors are to:
 - Seek shelter in a sturdy structure (building) away from glass windows if one is available.
 - Outdoor areas are not protected from flying debris which has been shown to cause most fatalities and injuries in tornadoes. As a result, remaining outside should be a very last resort. A sturdy structure could be identified as a residence, small building, school, nursing home, hospital, factory, or shopping center (always away from glass windows).
 - If a sturdy structure (building) is not available:
 - Stop and evacuate passengers.
 - Do not attempt to outrun the tornado.
 - Do not remain on the bus.
 - Radio and/or call school administrators and 911 to advise them of your situation and location.
 - Seek safety in a below ground level location that is:
 - Away from the bus.
 - And to the extent practical, on the side of the road without power lines, utility poles, trees etc.
 - Do not use bridges and overpasses for shelter.
 - Instruct passengers to lie flat, face down and to protect their head by using a jacket, blankets, other clothing, or their arms and hands.

Identify possible shelter locations along all scheduled routes. For example, if our students are traveling to or from Shawnee, we need possible shelter locations in Shawnee, Tecumseh, and Asher.

Lightning Safety Plans and Protocols

Always be prepared to take safety precautions and have a plan in place should you need to take shelter when severe weather is approaching. We all know what to do and where to go when we are inside the building. But what are your plans when students are on the playground, golf course, soccer field, baseball field, tennis courts or track.

The thing that may scare me the most is lightning. If you can see lightning or hear thunder --- Take shelter immediately!

The following protocols should be followed:

When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning.

- 1. Suspend play, practice, or recess and take shelter immediately.**
- 2. Thirty-minute rule. Once play or practice has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming outdoor activities.**
- 3. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30 minute count requires you to reset the clock and begin another 30 minute count.**

These lightning protocols are NOT suggestions --- they MUST be followed in EVERY instance when students are engaged in any outdoor activity and lightning is present!

Coaches – THIS MEANS PRACTICE TOO!