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## **News Release**

### **PrepareAthon! Tornado Drill to be held on Feb. 8**

#### ***Statewide drill will help reinforce tornado preparedness***

(ATLANTA) –The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency will hold a statewide PrepareAthon! tornado drill on Feb. 8, at 9 a.m. GEMA/HS urges Georgians to participate, as the peak of tornado activity typically occurs in the spring months. This event coincides with Severe Weather Preparedness Week to encourage Georgians to prepare now for whatever weather may come our way.

“This year has been unpredictable for Georgia when it comes to severe weather,” said Homer Bryson, director of GEMA/Homeland Security. “Thunderstorms, straight-line winds, tornadoes and ice storms have found a home in much of Georgia in January alone. Being prepared is one of our highest priorities, so we encourage Georgians to prepare now for the unexpected.”

*Ready Georgia's* PrepareAthon! for Tornado Safety is part of America's PrepareAthon!, a national, grassroots campaign designed to increase individual and community preparedness and resilience through hazard-specific drills, group discussions and exercises throughout the year.

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), tornadoes are the leading severe weather-related killer in Georgia. They have proven to be some of nature's most violent storms, appearing with little warning and generating wind speeds that can exceed 250 mph. There were numerous tornado events for 2016 in Georgia with no deaths. GEMA/HS encourages Georgians to do all they can to be prepared for this type of weather to prevent any loss of life. Go to <http://ready.ga.gov/be-informed/tornadoes/tornado-drill-procedures/> for more information.

To prepare, plan and stay informed about tornadoes, Ready Georgia shares the following tips:

#### **Before a drill**

- Make a [Ready kit](#) for at least three days of self-sufficiency.
- Familiarize yourself with the terms that are used to identify a tornado hazard.
  - A tornado watch means weather conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop.
  - A tornado warning means either a tornado is occurring, or expected to develop shortly in your area and you need to take shelter immediately.
- Determine in advance where you will take shelter during the tornado drill.
  - Storm cellars or basements provide the best protection.
  - If underground shelter is not available, an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible in the best option.
  - In a high-rise building, go to a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible.

#### **During a drill**

- Announce the start of the tornado drill and inform participants that they should act as though a tornado warning has been issued.

- Evacuate participants, just as you would if you were taking shelter during a tornado warning. Use stairs to reach the lowest level of a building; avoid using elevators.
- Once participants reach the designated safe area they should crouch as low as possible to the floor, facing down and covering their heads with their hands.
- Once everyone has evacuated and taken cover, announce that the drill is over.

**After a drill**

- Review the drill to identify any necessary changes or improvements to your tornado safety procedures. For example:
  - Do more safe areas need to be identified?
  - Do the designated safe areas need to have clutter removed or need to be cleaned out to be more accessible?
  - Does everyone know the fastest routes to take shelter in the safe areas?
  - Is there a better method for letting everyone know of an approaching tornado needed?

For more information on preparing for severe weather, contact your local EMA or visit [www.ready.ga.gov](http://www.ready.ga.gov) or [www.gema.ga.gov](http://www.gema.ga.gov).

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