

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

By: Ben Sims

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

“Severe Weather Preparedness”

Designated by the National Weather Service in Topeka, March 6-10 is Severe Weather Preparedness Week in Kansas.

If you have lived in Kansas and the Midwest for very long, then you know it is commonplace to expect a wide variety of spring and summer weather. Tornadoes, damaging winds, large hail, flash flooding and lightning often dominate the news headlines in our part of the country. However, the manager of the Kansas Mesonet, Chip Redmond, suggests that you really cannot just focus on a couple weeks out of the year for severe weather to happen. Severe weather hazards can happen most anytime of the year. For example, we see tornadoes most often in the spring and early summer, but we could see them year-round. There have even been tornadoes in December before.

Kansas will have a statewide tornado drill on Tuesday, March 7 at 10 am. I encourage you all to participate in the drill by practicing the plans you have in place for seeking shelter from a tornado. It is best to keep this plan fresh and practice it every couple months. Practice this plan with children well in advance of severe weather threats. This can help to ease a child’s anxiety in a real emergency. It is not worth getting caught by surprise and being unfamiliar with your plan. Redmond suggests that anytime there is a wind threat, whether it is a tornado or severe winds, the best thing to do is to get centrally located in your house. Typically, a bathroom that has four interior walls around it, or underneath the stairwell in a basement. You want as many walls between you and the outside in all directions.

Keep a weather safety kit that includes such items as non-perishable food, blankets, boots, extra clothes, helmet, a weather radio, batteries, a charging device for phones and even a map to track the path of the storm while listening to news reports.

Despite the drought we have been facing, flash flooding is still a concern. Flash flooding kills more people than tornadoes most years because people underestimate the power of the water. A good slogan to remember for water over bridges and road ways is “Turn Around, Don’t Drown.” It doesn’t matter how badly you need to get somewhere. You can’t be sure of the turbulence and current that the water has underneath and what the state of the road is underneath.

“When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.” Lightning strikes the U.S. 25 million times a year, according to the National Weather Service, and accounts for an average of 47 deaths. Be aware of your area in severe weather conditions. They aren’t perfect, but pay attention to the forecasts as they can change quickly. It might be a good idea to get in the habit of checking the weather at the beginning, middle, and end of the day.

Information comes from Kansas Mesonet Manager, Chip Redmond.

For more information regarding upcoming programs, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.