

NOAA Weather Radio is Your Full-Time Sentinel for Disasters

When severe weather is nearing your home, time is a critical factor in ensuring your safety. The quickest way you can find out whether you're in harm's way is by listening to weather radio.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio system is known as the "Voice of the National Weather Service (NWS)." Broadcasting 24-hours a day, weather radio is the number one source for weather and emergency information. Weather radio covers all hazards from flash floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes, to man-made disasters such as oil spills and toxic chemical releases.

To receive weather radio requires a specialized receiver that allows you 24-hour access to the NWS. The radios come in different sizes with a variety of functions depending on your needs. Steven Cooper, acting chief of meteorological services for the NWS, said most popular models are the so-called "second generation" radios, which are equipped with a

specific area message encoder that can be programmed to issue warnings only when severe weather is approaching your area.

The radios, he said, allow you to



participate in everyday activities with the security of knowing you will be warned when severe weather is affecting your area. "One of the beautiful things about the radio is that you can be sleeping in the middle of the night and be warned," he said.

The radios also can be equipped to

warn the hearing and visually impaired by using strobe lights, bed-shakers, pagers and other devices. Many of the radios are battery-operated and portable so that as you travel, you can become aware of weather conditions in other areas.

Florida has been one of the leaders in recognizing the value of weather radio. Following a series of deadly tornadoes in 1998, the Division of Emergency Management (DMS) created the Florida Warning and Information Network (FWIN). FWIN's mission is to increase public awareness about weather disasters and promote safety practices.

FWIN is helping to construct seven new transmitters with the goal of providing radio coverage to 97 percent of the state. The radio broadcasts also are being offered to television stations as part of the state's emergency alert system.

DMS Senior Management Analyst Chuck Hagen said FWIN has distributed over 13,500 weather radios throughout the state in public schools, nursing homes and daycare facilities. He said FWIN's goal is to convince people that weather radios are a necessary safety item in every home. "We would like to see the radios become as commonplace as smoke detectors," he said.

For more information on weather radios contact: www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html

CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY ACTIVITY

SNOWFLAKE CRYSTALS

What you need:

- 1 cup water
- a cooking pot
- 2 cups sugar
- a jar
- a piece of string
- a pencil
- a wooden spoon



With adult supervision, heat the water in the pot until the water boils. Add sugar, stirring until it dissolves, possibly adding a little heat to aid in the dissolving process. Let sugar solution cool, then pour it into a jar. Tie one end of the string to the middle of the pencil. Rub a little sugar into the other end of the string and attach it to a paper clip. Then drop the paper clip end into the sugar solution. Lay the pencil across the rim of the jar. The paper clip should be suspended in the sugar water mixture by the string. Leave the jar on the counter for a few days, stirring occasionally. Can you see crystals growing on the string? What is happening?

As the sugar solutions cools and some of the liquid evaporates, the dissolved sugar comes out of the water or crystallizes to form sugar crystals.

Make Your Home Safe During the Holidays

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) reports that fires during the holiday season injure 2,000 people and cause over \$500 million in property damage each year. The following are some simple steps that you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday.

- ✓ Do not put your live tree up too early or leave it up for longer than two weeks.
- ✓ Dispose of your tree by taking it to a recycling center or having it hauled away by a community pick-up service.
- ✓ Never burn wrapping in a fireplace, it can throw off dangerous sparks and produce a chemical buildup in the home that could cause an explosion.
- ✓ Inspect old light strands for cracks, frayed edges, bare spots or gaps in the lighting before putting them up.
- ✓ Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe.
- ✓ Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet.
- ✓ Never put candles in a tree, or leave candles/lights unattended.



FLASH FINDINGS

FLASH Conducts Poll on Disaster Prevention

On behalf of the Florida Alliance for Safe Homes and Institute for Business & Home Safety, Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, Inc. of Washington, D.C. conducted a statewide public opinion poll to gauge Floridians' awareness, attitudes and concerns about protecting their families and homes from natural disasters.

630 likely Florida voters were interviewed by phone from October 7 through October 10, 1999.

Highlights of Findings

- Of the various types of natural disasters that typically occur in Florida, 73% of Floridians expressed greatest concern for the dangers posed by hurricanes.

- Fifty-seven percent of Floridians or their families have personally experienced some sort of natural disaster. 88% of those, their most recent experienced a hurricane.
- Forty-six percent of Floridians remember receiving information about home safety within the past six months, while 49% stated they have never received any safety information.
- Of those who remember receiving information, 52% got information from the news media and 16% or less got their information from the insurance industry, government or non-profit organizations. But, more people trust non-profit organizations to provide this information.
- Floridians think that television (37%) is the most effective method for getting information about safety, 22% said mailings or newsletters, 17% newspapers

or magazines, and less than 10% said Internet was the most effective method.

- When asked to estimate the cost to “reasonably” protect the homes and families from natural disasters, Floridians were all over the board in the amount estimated.
- Sixty percent of Floridians report having spent some money to better protect their homes and families from natural disasters, but of those, less than 50% have spent more than \$999.
- Only 41% report that they are willing to spend any additional money to protect their homes and family.
- Eighty-two percent suggest that some sort of incentive would motivate them to take additional safety steps.

What is the most effective way to receive information about making your home safer from natural disasters?

Internet	7%
Newspaper or magazine	17%
Radio	4%
Television	37%
Mailings or newsletters	22%
Face-to face meeting/seminar	9%
Other/Not sure	4%

How prepared are you for a natural disaster?

Give yourself the appropriate points for each box that you check and then measure your disaster preparedness below.

1. At least two weeks supply of non-perishable or special dietary foods (10 points) _____
2. Drinking water - at least one gallon per person per day for two weeks (10 points) _____
3. High energy foods like peanut butter, crackers and trail mix (5 points) _____
4. A first aid kit (10 points) _____
5. A family disaster plan (15 points) _____
6. Important documents stored in waterproof container (10 points) _____

Give yourself one point for each of these items you have in your house (or garage):

1. Flashlights and batteries for each member of the family _____
2. Portable radio and extra batteries _____
3. Non-electric can opener _____
4. Matches in a waterproof container _____
5. Shut-off wrench to turn off the gas and water to your house _____

TOTAL _____

Scale: 60-70 Very Prepared, 40-59 Somewhat Prepared,
Less than 39 Needs Improvement

Call FLASH today at 1-877-221-SAFE!

New Year's Resolutions

The turkey is eaten, the relatives are gone, now for those New Year's Resolutions... I resolve:

- ✓ To make sure the street number of my house is clearly visible from the roadway so emergency vehicles can easily locate my family in our time of need.
- ✓ To regularly clear my yard each month of debris to create a ten foot defensible space to guard my home against wildfire and damage from flying debris in the event of a storm.
- ✓ To brace my garage door since approximately 80 percent of residential hurricane wind damage starts with wind entry through garage doors.
- ✓ To pre-measure and pre-drill plywood shutters before hurricane season begins.
- ✓ To contact my local electrical company to install whole house surge protection to guard my home and appliances against the threat of lightning damage.



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FLASH POINT OF VIEW

The Perfect Resolution



By Steven M. Seibert
Secretary, Florida Department of
Community Affairs

At this time of year, we place emphasis on spreading goodwill and cheer to our families, neighbors and friends. We express ourselves by exchanging gifts, spending time with our family and recognizing our accomplishments. The holiday season is also a time we use to find ways to enhance our lives, seize new opportunities and make new resolutions. So, this year, as you prepare to welcome the New Year, think about adopting what I call the perfect New Year's resolution: "Making Home Safety a Way of Life."

As obvious as it may seem, the need to feel safe in our homes is a primary need we all have. We want to feel protected from the elements and the threat of natural disasters. The good news is that there are steps all of us can take to make our homes safer. The even better news is that most of these steps are relatively inexpensive.

We should all have an emergency home plan that the entire family is familiar with, one that explains what to do or where to go in case of an emergency. Installing shutters and other protective measures across windows, doors and other openings could protect you and your family during a storm from flying debris or shattered glass and eliminate window replacement costs. Bracing the gable end of your roof or

re-nailing the sheathing would strengthen your roof's ability to withstand high winds.

The threat of hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and other natural disasters exists year-round, and we should all be prepared for any one of these events. So, please make time during the gift-giving, stocking-stuffing and family gatherings of the holiday season to do something about home safety. "Making Home Safety a Way of Life" is the perfect resolution because it protects your family and home for future seasons of cheer and goodwill.

For more information on the Florida Department of Community Affairs and how to make home safety a way of life, access www.dca.state.fl.us, or call 850-488-8466 or 1-877-FLADCA2.

FLASH LINKS

A sampling of useful home safety web sites...

[State Farm Kids Page](http://www.statefarm.com/kidstuf/kidstuf.htm)

www.statefarm.com/kidstuf/kidstuf.htm

[FEMA's Snowman Game](http://www.fema.gov/kids/games/snowman)

www.fema.gov/kids/games/snowman

[Winter Safety Tips](http://www.redcross.org/tips/december/winter/html)

www.redcross.org/tips/december/winter/html

[Florida Division of
Emergency Management](http://www.fldisaster.org)

www.fldisaster.org
[National Weather Service](http://www.nws.noaa.gov)

www.nws.noaa.gov