

Wolf Administration: Prepare for Severe Summer Weather During Global COVID-19 Pandemic

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration is urging the public to consider how COVID-19 could change or alter emergency preparedness plans leading into summer, when we face the threat of severe weather that comes with warmer weather.

“The Atlantic hurricane season started just last week and while Pennsylvania doesn’t often take a direct hit like coastal states, we face weather systems that can cause flooding or significant power outages,” said PEMA Executive Deputy Director Jeff Thomas. “The reality of COVID-19 will change the way people plan for emergencies, and the time to think about those changes is now, not in the middle of an emergency.”

Thomas said that families should review their emergency kits and plans. Emergency kits should be updated with COVID-19 necessities such as cloth masks, hand sanitizer, and medication. Additionally, if Pennsylvanians plan to host friends or family who evacuate their homes for any reason, they should consider the need for additional emergency supplies, and plan for physical distancing measures to protect family or vulnerable loved ones.

Emergency managers, public health professionals and state, county and local officials are taking measures to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19 among people who seek safety in a disaster. [Tips to prepare to shelter](#) from severe weather include:

- Knowing where to shelter if you do not typically shelter at home;
- Following guidance on when and where to shelter;
- Staying informed with weather alerts through cell phone alerts, a NOAA weather radio or twitter alerts; and
- Prepare an emergency kit with personal items you need in an emergency.

“Any actions to protect yourself from immediate threats to life safety should take priority, such as sheltering during severe weather,” Department of Health Deputy Secretary for Health Preparedness and Community Protection Ray Barishansky said. “However, whenever possible, all COVID-19 protective action guidance should be followed as long as it does not slow response or cause greater harm. It is essential that we act now to prepare for severe weather this summer.”

Families should have multiple ways to get severe weather alerts. A NOAA weather radio is an inexpensive and portable option that provides location-based weather alerts. Most models are battery-operated, but others can be powered via a USB connection, solar or by manually cranking a handle on the unit to store power.

Many media provide local weather alerts via text message, social media or apps that can be downloaded to a cellphone. Residents are encouraged to select one or more trusted media outlets, and sign up for the [AlertPA](#) notification system by CodeRED for emergency and weather related alerts, health notifications, building alerts, and other updates from commonwealth and federal agencies. Keep in mind there should never be a cost for weather alerts, other than data and texting charges that may be levied by a wireless carrier.

There are five National Weather Service Offices that service Pennsylvania, and each makes weather information available via Twitter and Facebook: NWS Cleveland ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)); NWS Pittsburgh ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)); NWS State College ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)); NWS Philadelphia/Mt. Holly ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#)); and NWS Binghamton ([Twitter](#), [Facebook](#).) Users do not need a social media account to access the information shared on either platform.

For information and updates related to COVID-19, visit the Department of Health website at www.health.pa.gov or [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

More information about how to prepare for an emergency, including specific information for people with specialized needs such as pets or access and functional needs, is available on the [ReadyPA](#) webpage.