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Severe Weather Awareness Week serves as a reminder weather radios save lives

Recognizing the importance of being aware of the dangers associated with severe weather, Sarasota County commissioners have declared the week of Jan. 24-30 as Severe Weather Awareness Week.

"One only needs to look at the daily news to know it is important to be prepared to react when severe weather threatens," said Ed McCrane, emergency management chief. "Tornadoes, hurricanes and floods can strike at a moment's notice, and quick action must be taken to protect families and homes from harm. Radio and television are the most familiar ways of being alerted to severe weather situations, but they are not always the best method."

McCrane recommends that people, as part of their emergency preparedness plans, have a Weather Alert Radio, which provides alerts to severe weather conditions 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Weather Alert Radios are the best protection against hazardous weather events," said McCrane. "Local weather reports and warnings are broadcast directly to these radio receivers around the clock by the National Weather Service. Weather Radios advise people of severe weather watches and warnings, buying extra time for people to react before dangerous storms hit their areas. When in the path of something like a tornado, minutes and seconds can mean the difference between life and death."

The goal of the NOAA Weather Radio initiative and local Emergency Management is to someday have NOAA Weather Radios in every home, and in all schools, hospitals and other public gathering places, to give the kind of information needed to safeguard people and their homes during a disaster.

NOAA Weather Radios can be purchased at many retail stores that sell electronic merchandise, including stand-alone electronic retail outlets, electronics departments within department stores, and some drug stores. Prices vary depending on the model.

Sarasota County Emergency Management recommends purchasing a model with a tone alert feature. It automatically alerts of the approach of severe weather. The newest models of radios contain a Specific Area Message Encoding feature, which allows the owner to select counties to receive alerts from. Other than a weekly test, the radio will only alert when the programmed counties are concerned.

Other alerts including hazardous material spills, Amber Alerts, evacuation notices, or shelter in place notices can be accessed on these radios also. This increases the preparedness of schools, businesses and homes.

For more information on weather radios and emergency preparedness, visit the Sarasota County All Hazards Web site at www.scgov.net, or call the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask for Emergency Management.

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