



# Severe Weather Warnings



## Storm Based Warnings

The National Weather Service (NWS) uses “Storm-based Warnings” also called “threat-based polygon warnings” to provide more specific information about the location of severe weather and the direction it is predicted to move (you may have seen this on your local weather reports). Storm-based warnings show the specific meteorological or hydrological threat area and are not restricted to geopolitical boundaries. By focusing on the threat area, warning polygons improve the NWS warning accuracy and quality. This reduces the likelihood of needlessly alarming those outside the threat area. When describing the threat area, the NWS ***does not*** list all cities or towns in that county or area.

The River Forest outdoor warning sirens are only activated for a Tornado Warning that will be affecting River Forest. The Village of River Forest has two outdoor warning sirens. One is located on the roof of the Village Hall and the second is located on a pole at the Pumping Station located at Jackson and Berkshire. The cone of the siren is motorized to rotate so the siren can be heard in all directions. The outdoor warning sirens sound a continuous siren tone and times out after five (5) minutes. If the threat or warning continues, the siren will be reactivated until the Tornado Warning timeframe has expired or is cancelled by the National Weather Service.

Although they have been upgraded and updated through the years, this outdoor warning siren system started out as the system to warn residents of a possible attack from foreign countries during the Cold War era back in the 1950's and 1960's. The outdoor warning sirens are tested on the first Tuesday of each month at 10:00am, unless there is threatening weather in the area.

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Although we observe Severe Weather Awareness Week in March every year, it's always important to keep an eye to the skies during the spring and summer months. It's also important to know about severe weather and the warnings we can get prior to an actual Severe Weather event. On average, the State of Illinois will see 53 tornadoes each year with nearly 20-percent occurring at night. Perhaps the earliest warning we can get is listening to our daily local weather forecasts. With new radar and weather technologies, local meteorologists can start letting us know multiple days in advance of severe storms that may be coming into the area.



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## Outdoor Weather Warning Sirens

By the name alone, outdoor weather warning sirens are intended to notify people who may be outdoors and it is a signal to stop what they are doing and seek a substantial building to take refuge. Although you may be close enough to the siren location to hear it indoors, Outdoor Weather Warning Sirens are not intended to be heard indoors.

A very important reminder, Outdoor Weather Warning Sirens **WILL NOT** sound an all clear signal. When a severe weather event is occurring, the National Weather Service will issue a weather warning with a general time of the warning expiration. It is best to stay inside, away from windows until that timeframe has passed. If that warning timeframe is extended, the Nation Weather Service will issue another Tornado Warning which would then prompt another activation of the outdoor warning sirens. If there was an “all clear” signal, people could be confused if the second siren was an “all clear” or another warning.

For a number of reasons, tornadoes that occur at night are twice as likely to result in fatalities. The National Weather Service and state and local emergency management officials strongly encourage people to have a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) All Hazards Weather Radio with battery backup. These radios can be programmed to receive alerts for specified counties to keep you and your family aware of impending weather and post-event information for all types of hazards. When an alert is issued for the programmed area, the device will sound a warning alarm tone followed by the essential information such as where to tune for more information. You can get severe weather alerts on your smart phone as well.

## Lightning sirens in Parks

The River Forest Park District maintains a series of lightning “predictors” that automatically activate when dangerous conditions exist that could produce lightning. The system will activate one-15 second blast of the horn and the yellow light will begin flashing and stay on indicating that the lightening threat is active. If conditions become safer and there is no active lightening in the area, the siren will activate three (3) -5 second horn blasts and the yellow light will turn off. However, if the lightning threat continues and the yellow light is on, it is NOT safe to use the fields in the parks and you should stay in your shelter. Dugouts are **not** to be used as shelters. Lightning predictors are located at the Park District offices at 401 Thatcher, Priory Park, Washington Park, Keystone Park, The River Forest Library building and Willard School.

If you are outdoors when the siren is activated, DO NOT seek refuge under a tent or canopy. Winds can turn the tent or canopy into a sail in a matter of moments. Thunderstorms can produce damaging winds, deadly lightning, large hail, flash floods and tornadoes and a tent or canopy is no match for severe weather.

For more information on Severe Weather Preparation please call the River Forest Fire Prevention Bureau at 708-714-3562.