



**Governor John R. Kasich**

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Ohio Department of Education  
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Ohio Department of Public Safety - Ohio EMA  
Ohio Department of Transportation  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Spring-Like Severe Weather Hits Ohio Early**  
*Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 18-24*

COLUMBUS, OH – Spring officially begins on March 20, but Ohio and other states in the Midwest received a good dose of spring-like severe weather last month. Continuous heavy rains and severe storms started on February 18, causing many Ohio rivers to flood and crest well above their flood stages. Flooding occurred in multiple Ohio counties, most notably those along the Ohio River.

On February 24, Governor John R. Kasich declared a State of Emergency for 17 counties due to severe flooding. Other notable severe weather events last month include:

- February 26 – Due to significant rain, a large rock slide occurs in Chesapeake, OH (Lawrence County), closing all lanes of State Route 7. No cars were damaged; no injuries reported.
- February 25 – The National Weather Service (NWS) confirmed an EF1 tornado in Hamersville, OH (Brown County). No injuries reported.
- February 25 – The NWS confirmed an EF1 tornado in Felicity, OH (Clermont County). No injuries reported.
- According to the NWS, February 20 was recorded as the hottest February day in Ohio history. Cincinnati topped out at 79 degrees; Columbus reached 77 degrees; Dayton, 75 degrees; Cleveland, 73 degrees; and Toledo, 69 degrees.

In a coordinated effort with the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA), Gov. Kasich is proclaiming *March 18-24 as Severe Weather Awareness Week* and encourages all Ohioans to learn what to do to protect themselves from spring and summer weather hazards and home emergencies.

“Ohio has gone full circle with severe weather hazards over the last four months,” said Sima Merick, executive director of Ohio EMA. “We’ve had a record-making November day with 17 tornadoes; six of which were the strength of EF2. We’ve had winter storms that created blizzard conditions; a record day of heat in February, and major flooding of Ohio rivers.

“If you haven’t already prepared for weather emergencies, Spring Severe Weather Awareness Week would be the ideal time. Have emergency plans for the different hazards that can occur. Conduct tornado and fire safety drills. Make emergency supply kits for your home, your car, or in case you need to evacuate. Consider purchasing flood insurance.”

As part of Severe Weather Awareness Week, as coordinated by OCSWA, the state of Ohio will participate in a statewide tornado drill and test its Emergency Alert System (EAS) on Wednesday, March 21 at 9:50 a.m. During this time, Ohio counties will sound and test their outdoor warning sirens. Schools, businesses and households are encouraged to practice their tornado drills and emergency plans.

## What Can Ohioans Do During Severe Weather Awareness Week?

- ***Prepare for Weather and Home Emergencies.*** Homes, schools and businesses should update their safety/ communications plans. Practice tornado and fire drills. Replenish supplies in emergency kits. Be informed – Know the risks about the different disasters and hazards that can affect families where they live, work and go to school.
- ***Know Ohio's Weather Hazards.*** Ohio's spring and summer weather hazards include tornadoes, thunderstorms, floods, and even snowstorms through early spring. Visit the OCSWA website: [www.weathersafety.ohio.gov](http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov) to view current Ohio weather and to review severe weather safety and preparedness information.
- ***Know Tornado and Other Weather Terms.*** Ensure that everyone knows the difference between a Tornado Watch and a Tornado Warning. A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado is imminent or occurring. If a tornado warning is issued for your area, do not stop to take photos or shoot video. Seek safe shelter immediately.

During tornado drills or actual tornado warnings, remember to **DUCK!**

**D** – Go **DOWN** to the lowest level, stay away from windows

**U** – Get **UNDER** something (such as a basement staircase or heavy table or desk)

**C** – **COVER** your head

**K** – **KEEP** in shelter until the storm has passed

Many Ohio counties have outdoor warning sirens that sound during severe storm and tornado warnings. During storm watches or warnings, listen to your NOAA Weather Radio or your local news for up-to-date weather information.

People also receive notification of severe weather and other emergencies through their cellphones and mobile devices. Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are emergency texts sent by authorized government alerting authorities. WEAs can notify you of extreme weather warnings, local emergencies requiring evacuation or immediate action, AMBER Alerts, and Presidential Alerts.

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Follow [OCSWA](#) and [Ohio EMA](#) on Facebook and Twitter during Severe Weather Awareness Week for additional severe weather awareness safety and preparedness information.