

TORNADO WATCHES & WARNINGS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PROTOCOL

In the fall of 2010, we encountered a rare situation in which the National Weather Service (NWS) had issued a tornado watch prior to the start of the school day. Some confusion existed as to the impact of this watch on our school day operations. Here is a reminder of how Xenia Community School District operates during tornado watches and warnings.

Tornado Watch – When the NWS issues a tornado watch, the District will do the following.

- Continue a normal school day schedule.
- Move recess and other scheduled outdoor activities to inside the building.
- Ensure that a staff member in each building monitors official weather bulletins and local radar.
- Consider the impact of storm fronts and squall lines on the transportation of students; transportation times may be altered to avoid transporting students during a thunderstorm when a tornado watch is in effect.
- Cancel or postpone after-school activities and athletic events if the watch is issued prior to the start of these activities.
- Designate a staff member to monitor weather bulletins and local radar if a watch is issued during after-school activities and athletic events (these events may be halted at the discretion of the on-site supervisor).

Tornado Warning – When the NWS issues a tornado warning for any region encompassed by the geographical area of the Xenia Community School District, the District will do the following:

- Issue the tornado warning alert/alarm announcement.
- Move people to designated shelter areas or take cover.
- Continuously monitor weather bulletins and local radar.
- Suspend all routine operations until the warning has expired (this may include delay of the starting and ending of the school day).

Recently, the NWS has changed many of their long-standing practices and protocols as it pertains to tornado warnings. Specifically, the NWS is no longer issuing tornado warnings for an entire county. Instead, warnings are issued for geographic areas in the probable path of a tornado. Also, the NWS is no longer only issuing warnings based on the visual sighting of an actual tornado or funnel cloud. Instead, the NWS will issue a warning at the presence of radar-indicated cloud rotation. Since radar-indicated cloud rotation is more prevalent than an actual tornado, we should expect tornado warnings to be more frequent than in the past.

We urge parents to refrain from coming to school to pick up their child during a tornado warning. The process of checking a child out of school diverts the attention of staff when their presence is needed to perform other important tasks during a warning. Parents shall be encouraged to take shelter.

Finally, children take their emotional cues from the caring adults in their lives. Please discuss with your family what should be done during periods of threatening weather. Severe weather watches and warnings are a common aspect of living in Ohio, and children are able to learn to calmly and deliberately respond to tornado watches and warnings.

If you have any questions regarding the District's procedures during a tornado watch or warning, feel free to contact your child's appropriate principal.

Revised 2/27/12 RTB