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ODU to Conduct Tornado Preparedness and Emergency Notification System Drill on March 17

March 11, 2020

Old Dominion University, in conjunction with other Virginia institutions of higher education, state agencies, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and the National Weather Service (NWS) will participate in the Statewide Tornado Drill on March 17, an annual effort to prepare members of the University community for tornado emergencies and test public warning systems.

"When a tornado warning is issued, that isn't the time to figure out how to keep your loved ones, co-workers, friends and neighbors safe. Virginians should use the statewide tornado drill on March 17 as an opportunity to test their tornado emergency procedures and discuss preparedness efforts for these deadly and unexpected storms, which can touch down in Virginia throughout the year," Virginia Department of Emergency Management State Coordinator Jeff Stern said.

The drill will start at approximately 9:45 a.m. with an activation of the ODU Alerts emergency notification system (ENS). Official notifications during the approximately 15-minute drill may be made through text messaging, desktop computer and digital signage override alerts, voice phone calls, student/faculty/staff email, the ODU website and outdoor loudspeakers (installed at the Norfolk campus, intended for exterior notification only). Students, faculty and staff who have not already signed up to receive alerts are encouraged to visit the [ODU Alerts website](#) to register for the free service.

For campus locations with a National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio installed, an NWS-issued test alert may sound and a test message may be



displayed. Local radio stations, TV stations and cable outlets may also broadcast the test message via the Emergency Alert System.

"Tornadoes can occur any month of the year. In 2019, 19 confirmed tornadoes touched down throughout the Commonwealth, impacting 21 different jurisdictions," said Jeff Orrock of the National Weather Service in Wakefield. "Looking back over the past decade, tornadoes occurred in every year, though there were active and quiet tornado years. 2011, 2016 and 2018 were the deadliest years for tornadoes while 2004 was by far the most active year with over 80 tornadoes reported that year. 2007 was the quietest with only two tornadoes recorded."

Jared Hoernig, ODU's director of Emergency Management, added the following tips:

- A tornado warning means that a tornado has been spotted or indicated by weather radar.
- When a tornado warning is issued, normal daily activities should temporarily cease and building occupants should shelter in place in an interior room or area, away from windows. Persons on the uppermost floor of a multi-story building should move to the next floor down to shelter in place.
- Elevators should not be used during a tornado warning.
- While sheltering in place, occupants should crouch as low as possible, protect their head and neck, and remain in place until the all-clear message is issued.
- If outdoors, persons should seek the closest substantial shelter or lay flat in a ditch or depression, covering their head and neck.

For more information on the tornado drill, severe weather safety and other hazards, visit www.odu.edu/emergency, <https://www.weather.gov/akq/2020VAAswpw> and follow ODU Emergency Management on Twitter, Instagram and YouTube (@MonarchReady). The Statewide Tornado Drill, promoted throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, is part of ODU's emergency management program.

In the event of an actual emergency, ODU's tornado preparedness and ENS drills will be rescheduled for 9:45 a.m. March 18. Questions should be directed to the Office of Emergency Management: oem@odu.edu or (757) 683-5116.