

U.S. Dept. of Commerce

New York State

NOAA, National Weather Service

Disaster Preparedness

Offices Serving New York State

Commission

FOR RELEASE,

IMMEDIATE:

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NEW YORK STATE WEATHER

WARNING TESTS SCHEDULED

ALBANY – The 16th annual statewide hazardous weather drill is scheduled for March 23 and 25. On those days, the five National Weather Service (NWS) offices serving New York State will issue test-warning messages for hazardous weather threats that develop rapidly.

Specifically, a test severe thunderstorm warning will be issued on March 23 and a test tornado warning will be issued on March 25.

This drill is being conducted in cooperation with the New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission, comprised of state agencies such as the Division of State Police, the State Department of Education, and the State Emergency Management Office.

Governor George E. Pataki has recognized the importance of the communications drill by officially proclaiming March 21-27, 2004 as Weather Hazards Awareness Week in New York State.

“New York State has an excellent emergency management system in place that, in coordination with the National Weather Service, has proven to be a highly reliable method of alerting the public about impending weather hazards,” Governor Pataki said.

“But the need to conduct these annual communications drills is all the more important when we

stop to consider some of the events which occurred in the Empire State in just this past year,” the Governor said.

Among those weather events were last April’s ice storm that disrupted of the transportation network and the electrical power grid in the Central and Western portions of the State and the series of extremely powerful storms last summer that caused widespread flooding, and tornado and high-wind damage across the state.

At the height of the ice storm, more than 300,000 customers were without electrical service. Within hours of the storm’s onset, Governor Pataki mobilized State agencies to assist localities and hundreds of State agency personnel joined the efforts of local crews to open roads as quickly as possible, coordinate power restoration, and deployed generators to critical facilities

The summer storms caused the loss of electric service to thousands of customers statewide and produced significant debris, wind and water damages to public and private facilities. Once again, hundreds of State personnel were involved in the response and recovery operations including those from Department of Transportation, State Police, State Emergency Management Office (SEMO), Department of Correctional Services, Office of Fire Prevention and Control, and the Public Service Commission.

“The State and local response has been swift and effective in providing help to our citizens during these times of greatest need,” Governor Pataki said.

“Such an efficient response rate has saved untold lives and protected millions of dollars in property, and is the result of years of planning and training by State, federal and local agencies, voluntary organizations and the private sector.”

Communications capabilities for warning dissemination will be tested across the Empire State in the March 23 and 25 drills. These capabilities include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Weather Radio and Weather Wire Service, the emergency management’s community’s National Warning System (NAWAS) and the New York Statewide Police Information Network (NYSPIN). NAWAS and NYSPIN are New York’s official emergency management information communication systems for state agencies and local officials.

Internally, the communications drills will give National Weather Service staffs the opportunity to practice skills usually applied under stress. Externally, the statewide drill gives public safety and preparedness officials, the broadcast media and all New Yorkers the opportunity to test their planned methods of receiving emergency weather messages. It also affords the opportunity to test plans for responding to a weather emergency.

In the event hazardous weather actually threatens on any scheduled drill day, the drill for that day will be postponed until the same day the following week.

For more information, contact the Warning Coordination Meteorologist listed below at the nearest National Weather Service office.

Albany:	Warning Coordination Meteorologist	518-435-9587
Buffalo:	Stan Levine	716-565-0015
Long Island:	Gary Conte	631-924-0593 x223
Binghamton:	Dave Nicosia	607-770-9531 x223
Burlington:	Steve Hogan	802-862-8711 x223

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DP DPC media contact: Dennis Michalski (518) 485-5666

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