

CITY CONNECTION

Emergency Preparedness

When a disaster or other emergency occurs, no time is left for planning so you need to plan, prepare, and be aware in advance. Plan by creating an emergency plan for your household. Gather information about the types of emergencies which may affect our area, the community warning system, where to find shelter if needed, and emergency contact phone numbers. Meet with your family and discuss how you will respond to possible emergencies, and practice and maintain your plan. Prepare an emergency kit. A disaster supply kit can save precious time should you need to evacuate or have to go without basic utilities for an extended period. Be aware. During a severe storm, spotters are dispatched to the approaching storm and city personnel activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). EOC personnel track the storms and when a weather threat approaches the city, the sirens are activated. The City of Stillwater tests sirens on the first Tuesday of each month at 11:30 a.m. If you hear the sirens at any other time, there is the possibility of a weather-related or other emergency that could require you to take precautions. A weather radio is a good awareness tool. Stillwater now has its own NOAA weather radio transmitter that provides weather information 24 hours a day. Many weather radios are equipped to receive special warning tones that will activate the radio and sound an audible alarm if severe weather is imminent.

Because Oklahoma is vulnerable to a variety of severe weather hazards including severe heat, thunderstorms, flash floods, tornadoes, and snowstorms, it is important to know the difference between a watch and a warning for severe weather. A severe weather *watch* means that severe weather may develop. A severe weather *warning* means a storm has developed and is on its way – take cover immediately! The safest place to ride out any storm when you do not have access to a safe room is inside a secure building or a well built home. Before an emergency strikes, take time to identify your safest place at home, at work, and at school. Usually the safest place will be on the lowest floor. If you live in a mobile home, identify the nearest sturdy building – it is not safe to remain in a mobile home during a storm. Public shelters in Stillwater are available at the following locations on the OSU campus:

4-H Youth Development Building at the corner of Hall of Fame and Monroe. The south center entrance is wheelchair accessible.

Ag Hall at the corner of Farm Road and Monroe. The south entrance at the east end is wheelchair accessible.

Engineering South east of the OSU Library. The basement is wheelchair accessible but only by elevator.

Student Union. The entrance from the center level parking garage is wheelchair accessible.

During and after an emergency, it is important to stay calm. Take time for a deep breath and focus on managing yourself and the situation as best you can. By planning, preparing, and being aware, riding out the storm may be a little easier. Additional storm preparation information is available at www.redcross.org and www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/.

City Connection is brought to you by the City of Stillwater as a public service to provide regular information about City services and to respond to general questions asked by the public about their local government. Today's information is provided by the Stillwater Emergency Coordination & Communications Center. For further information, please contact the Center at 405-372-7874.