

Letter to the University of Mississippi Community

The University of Mississippi values your safety. The Crisis Action Team and Incident Response Team spend considerable time planning and implementing strategies to provide you with timely information for your safety in times of imminent danger. Each person has a responsibility for his/her own safety, which includes knowing what to do in an emergency.

The Crisis Action Team has reviewed the reports of behaviors and actions that took place on our campus and in our community during the recent inclement weather. We have reports of people doing exactly what has been recommended, and we have reports that some did not. The team evaluated these reports in light of our current procedures, and the Crisis Action Team developed this letter to communicate key clarifications and instructions that should become common knowledge on our campus.

Sirens mean that a Tornado Warning has been issued, and our campus is in danger. These sirens should be taken very seriously and are only activated by the local Emergency Management Administrators if the National Weather Service has evidence that the campus is in the path of a tornado. The warning is over when the sirens have been silent for over 5 minutes. The siren system is the primary warning mechanism for tornadoes. This is how you will know we are under a warning.

In the case of a Tornado Warning (which means that a tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; and sirens are activated), **all university activities are automatically suspended.** This includes classes, meetings, laboratories, and business operations. At the first sound of a siren you should seek shelter immediately on the lowest level and toward the center of a building away from windows (for example, interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the Tornado Warning has expired. **Classes in session when the Tornado Warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the Tornado Warning has expired, provided at least half of the class period remains.**

During an emergency situation, you should refer regularly to the UM Emergency Website (www.olemiss.edu/emergency) for the latest information and updates about our campus. The current Emergency Website is being enhanced to include an area that will contain the latest information with instructions regarding activities, classes, and conditions during and after an emergency. While this will not take the place of sirens when a Tornado Warning is issued, this area of the UM Emergency Website will be updated frequently as conditions and situations change.

Our University has multiple systems in place to warn our campus community of potentially dangerous weather situations. As a result of these systems and procedures, the National Weather Service designated The University of Mississippi as a StormReady Community. On April 27, 2011, the Crisis Action Team followed the procedures and protocols for Tornado Warnings.

The University has provided information to our community in various ways so that we will all know what to do when a tornado threatens our campus. These efforts will continue and include:

- Tornado preparedness posters (http://www.olemiss.edu/emergency/2011_tornadoes.pdf) are posted in University buildings.
- Tornado preparedness information is posted on our emergency website (<http://www.olemiss.edu/emergency/>).

- Tornado preparedness information appears in the *M-Book*.
- The University of Mississippi main home page included information in the month of April, which is the month when tornadoes most frequently occur in Mississippi.
- The Crisis Action Team distributed tornado preparedness information to campus during Severe Weather Awareness Week (February 21 – 25, 2011).
- On Tuesday, April 26, 2011, the Crisis Action Team notified Building Mayors (one assigned to every academic building) of the upcoming severe weather and reminded them of the proper procedures.
- The Crisis Action Team sends ReAlert messages for every **Tornado Watch** regardless of time of day. Eleven have been sent this semester and nine were sent in April alone. This text message informs members of the University community that a Tornado Watch has been issued and urges people to take precautions, monitor local weather reports, and seek shelter if a Tornado Warning is issued.
- The local Emergency Management Administrators test tornado sirens regularly on Wednesdays around noon. These sirens are not tested on days when there is a possibility of inclement weather.

Again, your safety is important to us. These resources, the clarifications, and the enhancement of our emergency website are intended to help you understand and remember what to do when dangerous weather is imminent.

Sincerely,

The Crisis Action Team

Sparky Reardon, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

Calvin Sellers, Director of University Police and Campus Safety

Noel Wilkin, Associate Provost

Jim Windham, Emergency Management Coordinator and Director of Procurement