



# COUNTY OF NORTHAMPTON

## Department of Administration Division of Emergency Management Services

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### NEWS RELEASE

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### COUNTY TO PARTICIPATE IN STATEWIDE WEATHER EMERGENCY EXERCISE

(Nazareth) (March 12, 2010) - Robert Mateff, Director of the County Emergency Management Services Division, today announced that Northampton County will participate in a statewide weather emergency exercise on Thursday, March 18 that will include officials from Pennsylvania's 67 county emergency management agencies as well as many area schools, hospitals, nursing homes and day care centers. The exercise is designed to test severe weather emergency response plans that have been developed by municipalities and public or private facilities.

Governor Edward G. Rendell proclaimed March 14-20 as "Weather Emergency Preparedness Week" in Pennsylvania. Part of the observance will include a statewide severe weather exercise and a series of local public education programs. One of the newest public education efforts is

[www.ReadyPA.org](http://www.ReadyPA.org), a web site intended to help citizens with all-hazards emergency preparation. The site, which encourages citizens to "Be Informed, Be Prepared, Be Involved," includes information on potential disasters, checklists for home and car emergency kits, and family emergency plan templates.

"Statewide weather exercises such as the one scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>, give county and

municipal governments, schools, hospitals, and other special care facilities across the state an opportunity to test their disaster preparedness and response plans,” said Robert P. French, director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). “After the exercise, those plans can be reviewed to see where changes are needed so that in the event of an actual emergency, proper safety and response procedures are carried out in the most effective and efficient manner.”

A statewide monthly test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) will be conducted on Friday, March 18 at 9:15 a.m. originating in the state's emergency operations center in Harrisburg. EAS is a voluntary network of local radio and television stations and is the primary public alert and notification system for emergency information.

The exercise includes exercise-based severe weather reports to be issued by the National Weather Service over normal reporting channels, such as the NWS Weather Radio stations.

French said the state has reached out to all schools, day care centers, hospitals and nursing homes in Pennsylvania to encourage them to participate in the exercise. The state provides planning guides to assist these facilities in developing their emergency preparedness plans, and has supplied schools with teaching materials about floods and other weather emergencies.

“Those responsible for the safety of our state’s most vulnerable citizens need to be cognizant of the threat of severe weather here in Pennsylvania, and that includes looking back at what has happened here in the past in order to prepare for future events,” French said. “Pennsylvania is one of the most flood-prone states in the country, so heavy rain from violent storms or a tropical weather system that leads to flooding is always a concern.” According to French, 1996 exemplifies just how dangerous and unpredictable severe weather conditions can be. Pennsylvania experienced a record six presidentially-declared major disasters in 1996. Five major floods and record-breaking snow storms impacted every county in the state.

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