



**Governor John R. Kasich**

American Red Cross  
Emergency Management Association of Ohio  
National Weather Service  
Ohio Citizen Corps  
Ohio Department of Aging  
Ohio Department of Commerce-State Fire Marshal  
Ohio Department of Education  
Ohio Department of Health

Ohio Department of Insurance  
Ohio Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Ohio Department of Public Safety - Ohio EMA  
Ohio Department of Transportation  
Ohio Insurance Institute  
Ohio Silver Jackets  
WCMH – NBC4

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 7, 2017**

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**When the Tornado Sirens Sound, Will You Know What to Do?**  
*Spring Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 19-25*

COLUMBUS, OH – Last winter we had El Niño. This winter, it's La Niña – still a very mild and unusual winter, with minimal snowfall and ice accumulations, and record-breaking days with temps in the 50s and 60s. Fayette County had a tornado warning in December; thunderstorms swept across the state in January. When it comes to the weather in the Buckeye State, you need to be ready for anything.

In a coordinated effort with the Ohio Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (OCSWA), Governor John R. Kasich is proclaiming March 19-25 as Severe Weather Awareness Week and encourages all Ohioans to learn what to do to protect themselves from spring and summer weather hazards and home emergencies.

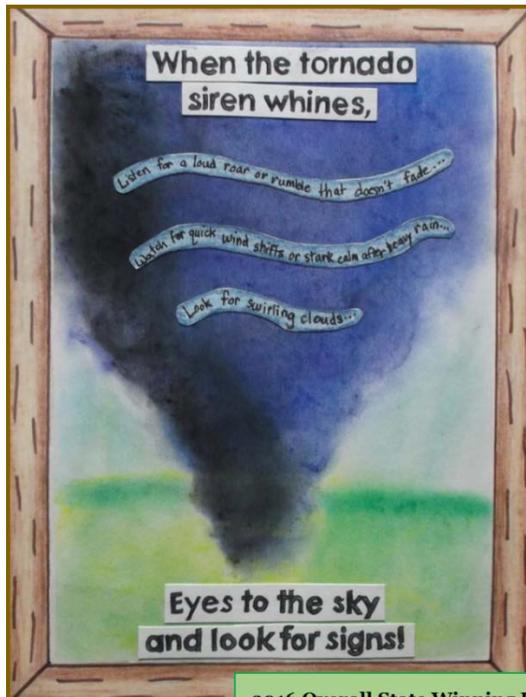
Schools, businesses and households are also encouraged to exercise their safety plans and drills during the Annual Statewide Tornado Drill, scheduled for Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9:50 a.m. Schools that participate in the statewide drill in March can usually credit that date as their required April tornado drill. Check with your local fire chief.

According to Ohio Fire Code 409.2, schools must conduct tornado drills at least once a month whenever in session during the tornado season. Ohio's "tornado season" is April 1 – July 30. See the State Fire Marshal's [letter and emergency/drill form](#).

***What can schools do during Severe Weather Awareness Week?***

- Review your school safety plan to prepare for high-risk days such as severe thunderstorms and tornado watches and warnings. The plan should have a designated person or office that will monitor the NOAA Weather Radio or Public Alert Radio for inclement weather events. Safety plans should include provisions for all after-hour school-related activities. Plans should also include how to disseminate severe weather information to every classroom.
- Ensure students and faculty know the difference between a **tornado watch** and a **tornado warning**. A tornado watch means conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes. A tornado warning is issued when a tornado is imminent or occurring. During a warning, seek shelter immediately.

- Ensure school buildings have designated tornado shelters or protective areas. The most interior areas on the ground floor, away from windows and glass are best for use as protective areas – such as hallways. Large, open rooms such as cafeterias, gymnasiums and auditoriums should never be used as protective areas. Modular and portable classrooms are also considered unsafe during tornadoes and thunderstorms.
- If schools are in session (not on spring break) and not conducting state tests, practice safety drills by participating in the Statewide Tornado Drill, March 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Have class discussions on severe weather safety and emergency preparedness. Visit OCSWA's [www.weathersafety.ohio.gov](http://www.weathersafety.ohio.gov) or [www.ready.ohio.gov](http://www.ready.ohio.gov) to learn what actions Ohioans can take before, during and after inclement weather and other emergencies that typically impact the state.
- Encourage students in 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade to participate in the Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest! Click [here](#) for poster contest rules.



**2016 Overall State Winning Poster**  
Artist: Grace Draeger, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Sandusky County



*AP File Photo*

School buses were tossed like toys when an EF4 tornado struck Millbury, Ohio (Wood County) on June 5, 2010. Seven people died in this storm. Lake High School (pictured) was destroyed.