



ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

SUBJECT	TORNADO EMERGENCY ALERT PROCEDURES		
NUMBER	74-04	SIGNED DATE	6/21/2024
ISSUED BY	Mark Washington, City Manager <i>Mark A. Washington</i>		
PREPARED BY	Emergency Management Department		
REVISED	4/16/85; 5/14/02; 9/23/03; 10/11/22; 6/8/23; 6/21/24		
ASSOCIATED POLICIES			
CITY VALUES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accountability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customer Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Equity	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability	

SUMMARY

This policy provides a detailed roadmap for the City of Grand Rapids' response to tornado watches and warnings at its facilities. It sets out responsibilities for city departments in terms of ensuring shelter facilities and communicating impending threats, along with specific steps for employees to follow before, during, and after a tornado event.

PURPOSE

To protect City Employees by establishing protocols for tornado emergencies, with an emphasis on shelter accessibility, internal communication, and clearly defined actions during various stages of tornado events.

POLICY

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

A. Tornado shelter facilities are to be designated for employee use at fixed-site City work locations whenever feasible. The Office of Risk Management will advise City Departments concerning adequate shelter facilities for specific locations. Departments shall inform their respective employees of the locations of such facilities. If shelters are located at City facilities, persons responsible for such facilities shall ensure that the shelters are always accessible and available for use when employees are on duty. Pre-determined tornado shelter locations in city facilities can be found in the City of Grand Rapids Facility Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and may be labeled on evacuation route maps within each facility.

B. City Departments will be responsible for establishing internal communications procedures for promptly notifying their on-duty employees when tornado watches and warnings are issued. Such procedures shall be tested at least annually by each department to ensure that they are functional and ready for implementation.

C. City Department Directors who require immediate notifications of tornado warnings shall register for the [City of Grand Rapids Emergency Alert System](#) to be notified of tornado warnings and severe weather incidents.

II. TORNADO WATCHES

A. When a tornado watch is in effect, City administrators, department heads and supervisors will immediately relay such information to all on-duty employees under their jurisdiction, advising them to be prepared to seek immediate shelter if a tornado warning is issued. The Grand Rapids Emergency Communications Center (ECC) staff will notify the Grand Rapids Emergency Management Administrator by telephone of the tornado watch, including details of the impacted area of the city. An “All Users” email will be sent to city personnel by the Office of Emergency Management.

III. TORNADO WARNINGS

A. When a tornado warning has been issued for any part of the city of Grand Rapids or upon receipt of other credible information indicating actual tornado conditions exist in any portion of the city of Grand Rapids, staff of the Grand Rapids 911 Emergency Communications Center (ECC) will activate the local tornado siren system and notify all public safety responders on their assigned radio talk groups. Grand Rapids ECC personnel assigned to fire dispatch will notify the Grand Rapids Emergency Management Administrator of the tornado warning siren activation by telephone. An “All Users” email will be sent to city personnel by the Office of Emergency Management notifying them of the tornado warning.

B. When a tornado warning is in effect, City administrators, department heads and supervisors will immediately relay such information to all on-duty employees under their jurisdiction, advising them to seek immediate shelter if a tornado warning is issued for areas employees are working.

C. When a tornado warning has been issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) for any part of the city of Grand Rapids, or upon receipt of other credible information indicating actual tornado conditions exist in any portion of the city of Grand Rapids, city employees signed up for the Grand Rapids Emergency Alert System with an address located in the impact zone will receive cell phone notification of the warning, which will include further information from NWS.

D. Upon being informed that a tornado warning is in effect for their location, City employees should immediately respond in accordance with emergency plans and procedures established for their specific facility. Departments with critical emergency

responsibilities, including the Fire and Police Departments, may designate specific persons or groups to remain at their workstations during tornado warnings to ensure critical operations are maintained. Unless otherwise directed, employees are to move to a designated shelter area. Supervisors may, at their discretion, excuse their employees from work to allow them to attend to personal matters, if so requested. If employees are excused from work under such circumstances, time off will be treated either as vacation leave or leave without pay.

E. City employees are to remain in safe shelter facilities for the duration of a tornado warning affecting their location.

F. Supervisors are authorized to allow their employees to voluntarily depart from a shelter during a tornado warning condition when (1) an employee's work shift has terminated, or (2) when an employee specifically requests to be excused to attend to personal matters. If employees voluntarily leave a shelter during a tornado warning, they will assume full responsibility for their personal safety. If employees are excused from a shelter during their regular work shifts, such time off from work will be treated either as vacation leave or leave without pay.

G. All tornado warnings issued by the NWS are given an expiration timeframe. If a tornado warning is extended, the NWS will issue a new tornado warning with an updated timeframe. See example below.

