

Purpose: The StormReady Supporter application requires that the applicant facility has an appropriate Emergency Operations Plan that includes Weather Hazards that includes the following: procedures of gathering and disseminating information, who in the building makes decisions, shelter locations, contact information for critical personnel, and protocol to ensure weather information flows promptly between school officials who need to know. Also, this EOP should be coordinated with local first responders and emergency management. In addition, the activity for element 3-4 will allow students to engage in the 21st Century Skills of Critical Thinking and Creativity.

Special Note: Contact lists (Elements 3-2 and 3-3) and sheltering locations (Elements 4-1 and 4-2) are not covered in this section. Dissemination is included in Element 2-6.

Background and Instructions for Teacher: This activity may or may not be necessary depending your school's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). As mentioned in the Pre-Screen portion of StormReady in a Box, Minnesota State Statutes require a severe weather drill be held annually, and other emergency drills, such as lockdown and fire drills, be held five times annually. Of course, it is encouraged for schools and all facilities to do as many severe weather and other safety drills as possible.

Since State Statutes require these drills are held, this activity (and other EOP related activities) are designed to help enhance your school's EOP for weather hazards, not write one from scratch. It is assumed that your school already has an EOP in place. It is a StormReady Supporter requirement that your school's EOP be revised at least biannually.

The following is a description of some attributes of a StormReady EOP. As a reminder, discussion on shelters, emergency contact lists, and information dissemination to staff and students are covered in other elements as described above. These attributes can be added to your school's EOP or recommended to school administration for addition.

A good weather hazard EOP should include a weather watcher (can be part of Element 5-2, weather safety campaign) who provides daily updates and special updates for hazardous weather. The weather watcher should be versed in how to use the radar weather websites selected in Elements 2-3 and 2-4, as well as basic weather terminology. This person may also want to consider SkyWarn training (possibly part of Element 5-1) and have access to a NOAA Weather Radio (Element 1-1).

There must be someone in charge at all times. During the school day, a school administrator usually functions in this role, but EOPs need to account for evening and weekend events where school administration may not be present or available. These staff members may include: head janitors, athletic directors, athletic coaches, or others who may be on site during off duty hours. These individuals should be included on daily weather updates and watch/warning dissemination.



Most importantly, a strong weather hazard plan needs to be well-documented for each type of hazard, including: extreme temperatures, winter/ice storms, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and flooding. All staff should be trained for all weather hazards. The StormReady Supporter application and Minnesota State statutes require a tornado drill, but procedures for other types of weather hazards should be frequently reviewed staff during pertinent times of the year (e.g. winter weather procedures reviewed in November, extreme heat procedures reviewed in May, etc.) There is no suggested timeline of these suggested hazard preparedness activities, with the exception of the tornado drill, which is held statewide in April.

Each type of hazard should have thresholds for action. Action plans for dense fog are vastly different than those for a tornado warning. The emergency operations plan should explain the action plans for each type of hazard. It should be noted that some actions (particularly those related to school closure and bus routes) may be district wide, therefore unable to be modified by an individual school. The National Weather Service suggests the following weather hazards be discussed in your school's EOP:

- Dense fog
- Flash flooding
- Extreme heat
- High wind
- Severe thunderstorms
- Tornadoes
- Winter/Ice storms
- Extreme cold

Some action plans can be as simple as canceling outdoor activities or holding the buses for 15 minutes, which require little to no practice. While other action plans require sheltering procedures that should be practiced and gone over with staff frequently.

Element 3-4 requires that a StormReady Supporter's application critical weather information flows quickly between the school's Emergency Operations Center or warning point, and other officials that need to be aware of the situation, such as district administration, bus company, other area schools, and first responders. The school's EOP needs to include protocol to ensure information about the weather and current procedures within the building is going to those officials.

Element 3-6 requires that the EOP be coordinated with first responders and emergency management officials. However, this is frequently in place upon the creation of the original EOP. However, any relevant modifications should be discussed with first responders and emergency management. This can be combined with Element 6-3 (first responder tour). Also, if your district includes multiple municipalities, be sure that first responders in each involved municipality are coordinated, not just one.



For obvious reasons, it is difficult to compose a concrete activity for students to work on and develop your school's EOP, as no two EOPs are alike. Therefore, for the development and improvement of the EOP, this is left to your discretion. Feel free to use the resources under "For Additional Information" to assist you and your class if you so choose. This EOP should be coordinated with local emergency officials. Student involvement is not required but certainly allowed for this element.

However, for Element 3-4, there is a student activity that applies critical thinking skills and that can be applied to the EOP. Students are given situations in which they are in a principal's shoes and they need to decide who to contact and why to contact them. While these concepts may not directly apply to your school's EOP, gives students an opportunity to simulate decisions that their principals make daily. While they may not directly work on the EOP, this is a great critical thinking and weather awareness exercise.

Instructions for Teacher (Element 3-4 activity):

1. Handout "Worksheet 3-4: Information Flow" out to students. Read of introductory material and directions with students. Have them work independently on the situations. If necessary, you can lead the first situation as an example.
2. Upon completion of the exercise, go over the activity with the students (A key with sample answers is provided in this package.) Ask the students if they have any questions, and explain to them how your school's Emergency Operation Plan handles these or other similar situations.

After the Activity: On the StormReady Supporter application: verify that your school has an EOP with a weather hazards section (Element 3-1), that there is a plan for information flow between officials (Element 3-4), and mark who the EOP has been coordinated with (Element 3-6).

For Additional Information:

Minnesota Comprehensive School Safety Guide (PDF file in additional information folder)
Minnesota Department of Education Sample EOP (PDF file in additional information folder)
FEMA Sample School Emergency Operations Plan (PDF file in additional information folder)

References:

Hazardous Weather Preparedness Manual for Schools. NWS Chicago. Sep. 25, 2014.
Minnesota School Safety Center

