

Working toward a Weather-Ready Nation

Being part of a Weather-Ready Nation is about preparing for your community's increasing vulnerability to extreme weather and water events. Americans live in the most severe weather-prone country on Earth. About 98 percent of all federally declared disasters are weather-related, leading to approximately 500 deaths per year, and nearly \$15 billion in damage.

The StormReady program helps arm America's communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property before, during and after the event. StormReady helps community leaders and emergency managers strengthen local safety programs.

StormReady communities, counties, universities and colleges, military bases, state/tribal governments, commercial enterprises and other groups are better prepared to save lives from the onslaught of severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness. No community is stormproof, but StormReady can help communities save lives.

To be officially StormReady, a community/group must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center.
- Have more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public.
- Create a system that monitors weather conditions locally.
- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars.
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

Ohio has a StormReady committee that consists of representatives from the National Weather Service, the Emergency Management Association of Ohio and the Ohio Emergency Management Agency. This committee processes all applications for StormReady designations within the state. Certification lasts for three years, then must be reviewed and approved for recertification.

How to become StormReady®

- Contact your local [National Weather Service office](#).
- Complete the [StormReady application form](#).
- Arrange a Verification Visit. The Ohio StormReady committee/verification team will review the applicant's hazardous weather plan to ensure you meet the [StormReady Guidelines \(see Appendix A\)](#). After the site visit, the verification team will forward a summary of the visit and other pertinent documentation to the Local Advisory Board for approval.

[Ohio Map of StormReady Sites](#)

Van Wert County proved it was StormReady®

In January of 2002, to earn a NWS StormReady designation, Van Wert County placed a series of warning alert systems in public locations, including a movie theater that ended up destroyed after an F4 tornado ripped through the area, which was part of a November 10-11 storm outbreak that swept across northwest Ohio and east-central Indiana. Twelve tornadoes killed 35 people in five states during the “Veterans Day Weekend tornado outbreak.”

The theater manager and his staff got more than 50 people out of the theaters and into safer conditions in a hallway and restrooms. Minutes later, a tornado tore off the building’s roof and tossed cars into the screen and front seats where minutes earlier, families were watching “The Santa Clause 2.”



Remains of the Van Wert Cinemas after an F4 tornado touched down in Van Wert, Ohio on Nov. 10, 2002.

The theater office was equipped with a Federal Signal Corporation local warning alert system called the “Informer.” The Informer was activated via a digitally encoded pager signal that automatically turns the unit on and sounds an alert. The theaters unit was tied directly into the Van Wert County siren system and activated immediately, once the Van Wert County Emergency Operations Center sounded the warning sirens.

Van Wert County EMA Director Rick McCoy said, “If we had not gone through the StormReady process and got our warning system in place before the storm, a lot of people would not have gotten the warning, and we could have lost many more lives.”

The tornado touched down in Van Wert County with 13 minutes lead time. The tornado struck the movie theater 28 minutes after the warning was issued.