



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 76.15, **Severe Weather Warning and Alert Systems**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure is to publicize the function and use of TTUHSC's warning and alert system.

REVIEW: This Operating Policy/Procedure will be reviewed by February 1 of every fourth year (E4Y) by the Chief of Police, the Vice President for Information Technology, and the TTUHSC Emergency Management Coordinator, with recommendations for revisions submitted to the Vice President for Facilities and Safety Services.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. Severe weather in the form of thunderstorms, damaging hail, high winds, and tornadoes are a threat to the Texas Tech community. TTUHSC maintains several warning and alert systems for use in the event major storms or other disasters threaten our community. Ideally, sufficient warning time will allow precautionary measures to be implemented. The unpredictability of weather conditions, however, does not always provide for adequate warning.
2. **Weather Hazard Announcements - National Weather Service.** There are four severe weather hazard announcements which are issued by the National Weather Service. These announcements and their definitions are:
 - a. Severe Thunderstorm Watch
Thunderstorms are expected which could be considered severe. A "severe" thunderstorm contains either damaging winds (surface gusts greater than 75 mph) or hail stones at least 3/4 inch in diameter, or both.
 - b. Severe Thunderstorm Warning
A severe thunderstorm has actually been sighted or is indicated by radar.
 - c. Tornado Watch
One or more tornadoes are expected to be generated by the severe thunderstorms.
 - d. Tornado Warning
A tornado has been sighted in the area or is indicated by radar.
3. **NOAA Weather Radio.** The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce provide continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information from the National Weather Service. Taped weather messages are repeated every two to three minutes and are revised on an hourly basis. When circumstances warrant, specially designed warning receivers (weather alert radios) can be activated. The weather alert radios sound an alarm indicating that an emergency exists, alerting the listener to turn the receiver up to an audible volume. Personnel in departments where the weather alert radios are located are expected to convey the message received to all other people in the area or building.
4. **TTUHSC Warning System.**
 - a. The public address system will be used where available to signal persons to take cover immediately.
 - b. The Stat!Alert system will be used to warn faculty, staff, and students at the affected campus to take immediate cover or provide instructions regarding other appropriate actions.

5. **Special Severe Weather announcements at TTUHSC.** On the TTUHSC campus, the following classifications have been assigned to weather conditions announced by the National Weather Service affecting Lubbock County.

- a. Severe Weather Watch
Conditions are **favorable** for severe thunderstorms or tornadoes.
- b. Severe Weather Warning
This code is for a tornado **warning** or a severe thunderstorm **warning**; tornadoes or heavy hail and high winds have been reported in Lubbock or the surrounding areas, but not necessarily in the immediate vicinity of TTUHSC.
- c. Immediate Danger
TTUHSC is in immediate danger of an approaching tornado or severe winds with heavy hail and rain.

Immediate Danger is the highest degree of severe weather alerts, and measures will be taken at this point to protect patients, visitors, and employees. This announcement will be announced upon authorization of the Initial Response Team (IRT).

6. **Responsibilities During “Immediate Danger.” A Severe Weather Event**

- a. Personnel
 - (1) Upon hearing “Immediate Danger”, you should seek shelter ***immediately***. Employees in the HSC building not directly involved in patient care should evacuate to the basement, interior offices, interior stairwells, and/or interior hallways away from all outside windows, using posted emergency evacuation routes.
 - (2) ***Do not use*** elevators for evacuation purposes.
 - (3) ***Do not go*** into an area where highly flammable or combustible liquids or gases are stored or where equipment might fall and cause injury.
 - (4) Do not go outside.
 - (5) Lie flat on the floor and use tables, or anything else available for protection.
- b. Patients
 - (1) Patients should be evacuated to an area of safety inside the clinics, interior offices, interior stairwells, and/or interior hallways. In speeding up the evacuation process, support departments have been assigned to assist (see 6.c., Clinical Assistance).
 - (2) ***Do not use*** elevators for evacuation purposes.
 - (3) ***Do not go*** into an area where highly flammable or combustible liquids or gases are stored or where equipment might fall and cause injury.
 - (4) High-risk patients who cannot be moved must be placed in areas of safety, covered with extra blankets, pillows, etc. and moved away from glass.
- c. Clinical Assistance

In the event a clinic needs additional personnel to assist in the relocation of their patients, they are to call neighboring clinics, patient services, and/or nursing services. Support

personnel will be assigned to assist.

In the event an Immediate Danger is announced, the following departments will send all available personnel to the TTHSC Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for assignment to needed areas: Plant Operations, General Services, Copy and Mail, and Safety Services. Once an assignment has been completed, the individual will return to the EOC for additional assignments.

d. Termination of "Immediate Danger"

When the "Immediate Danger" has been terminated by the TTUHSC EOC, the announcement will be made via the Stat!Alert system.

7. **Amarillo, Permian Basin, Abilene, and Dallas Campuses.** Severe weather policies for the Amarillo, Permian Basin, Abilene, and Dallas campuses are attached as Attachments A, B, C, and D.

8. **Departmental Responsibilities During "Severe Weather Watch."**

- a. Spot check to determine if patients or visitors are frightened or alarmed during a "**Severe Weather Watch**" and take actions deemed necessary to comfort and reassure them.
- b. Determine what assistance you will need and contact the TTUHSC EOC, so they can be prepared in the event the weather becomes more severe.
- c. Check your posted Emergency Evacuation Plan, to determine the route to an area of safety in case the need to evacuate arises.
- d. Employees not at their normal work stations should go closest safe area and contact their supervisor.
- e. Discuss and review safety measures within your department.

9. **Departmental Responsibilities During "Severe Weather Warning."**

- a. Spot check to determine if patients or visitors are frightened or alarmed during a "**Severe Weather Warning**" and take actions deemed necessary to comfort and reassure them.
- b. Determine what assistance you will need and contact the TTUHSC EOC, so they can be prepared in the event the weather becomes more severe.
- c. Check your posted Emergency Evacuation Plan in case you have to evacuate.
- d. Determine the route to an area of safety in case the need to evacuate arises.
- e. Supervise the removal of obstacles from corridors.
- f. Discuss and review safety measures within your department.
- g. Employees not at their normal work stations should go to the nearest safe area and contact their supervisor.

10. The STAT!Alert Emergency Notification System is tested at least three (3) times annually, during Fall, Spring, and Summer Terms. Fire panel annunciators are tested during scheduled annual fire drills.

11. If a tornado warning is issued or a tornado is sighted, the following action should be taken:

- a. Seek inside shelter, preferably a tornado cellar, steel framed or reinforced concrete structure (including all major University buildings);

- b. Evacuate upper floors of all buildings;
- c. Seek shelter in an interior hallway and stay away from windows;
- d. Lie flat on the floor and use tables, or anything available for cover;
- e. If caught in an open area, lay face down in the deepest depression available such as a ditch, culvert, or ravine.