



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: November 9, 2018
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Save the Date for the 2019 Tornado Drill**

The Statewide Tornado Drill, coordinated by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), is a yearly opportunity to prepare Virginians for tornado emergencies and to test public warning systems. Please mark your school calendar to note that the 2019 Statewide Tornado Drill will take place on Tornado Preparedness Day, **Tuesday, March 19, 2019, at 9:45 a.m.** (If widespread severe weather threatens the Commonwealth on that date, then the drill will be on Wednesday, March 20, at 9:45 a.m.). Participation in the **March 19, 2019**, statewide drill will fulfill the requirement of the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-137.1 for schools to participate in at least one tornado drill each year. Schools may choose an alternate date or time if this date is not convenient.

For help with planning the drill, school officials may wish to contact their local city, county, or town emergency management office. Emergency management officials can assist school personnel with identifying safe areas in the building and creating an emergency plan. A list of local emergency managers is available at the [Virginia Department of Emergency Management](#) website.

At approximately 9:45 a.m. on March 19, 2019, the National Weather Service will send a test tornado warning over National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radios. This test signal will sound a tone alert, show a test message, or flash to indicate a message, simulating what people would hear or see during an actual tornado warning. Local radio stations, TV stations, and cable outlets will also broadcast the test message via the Emergency Alert System.

The Virginia Department of Education supports participation in Tornado Preparedness Day, so please mark Tuesday, March 19, 2019, on your calendars. If it suits your schedule, you can use the day for educating staff and students about tornadoes, as well as holding a drill. Online

registration for the drill is available at the [VDEM tornado drill registration site](#). Schools should register individually to assist VDEM with coordination.

If you have questions about Tornado Preparedness Day or the statewide drill, please call the Virginia Department of Emergency Management Services External Affairs Director at (804) 897-6510, or contact Jeff Caldwell, at Jeff.Caldwell@vdem.virginia.gov. You may also contact Rebecca Counts Kahila, School Safety and Discipline Specialist, Office of Student Services, (804) 225-4654 or Rebecca.Kahila@doe.virginia.gov.

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