

Norfolk Insider

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“Warning Siren Not Always for Approaching Tornado”

Whether it be a tornado, an active shooter or a dangerous chemical release, people need to be informed as soon as possible about situations that are a threat to their safety.

Faythe Petersen, the Region 11 Emergency Manager, has been trained in how to respond to nearly every emergency situation imaginable. She knows that the best way to keep people safe is to keep them informed.

“Every situation is different. People think that some of these disasters that have recently happened across the country could never happen in Northeast Nebraska. Those things could happen in this area, though, and we need to be prepared,” Petersen said.



She said that, in the event of an emergency, officials give out information to local radio stations so that citizens know what steps to take to keep themselves and their families safe. Though many people think that a siren going off means that a tornado must be imminent, that might not be the case.

“A siren going off means that people are to turn on their radios and televisions and listen to what the emergency is and what they need to do to be safe. The emergency might be an approaching tornado or it might be an anhydrous leak. A siren is an alert that requires people to take some sort of action. Turn on the radio to a local media outlet and see what that action should be,” Petersen said.

In some instances, like if a tornado is in the area, it may mean taking the family and pets to the lowest level of the home. In other cases, such as a gas leak, people may be asked to leave the area. In an active shooter situation, people may need to lock their doors and stay inside.

There are currently nine outdoor warning sirens located in Norfolk. When they are activated, sirens in Hadar, Woodland Park and south of the Elkhorn River on Highway 81 to Bonita Drive are also activated.

Petersen emphasized that people are not to call 9-1-1 for information when the sirens go off as that ties up the city's communication system at a time when it may be needed most. Citizens should also not head outside to see if they can spot an approaching storm. Instead, they need to get information from a local media outlet.

Another way to keep abreast of emergency situations that may occur in Norfolk is to subscribe to City of Norfolk Emergency Alerts. This system is set up by City of Norfolk officials to send text messages of emergency alerts to cell phones of subscribers to the system. City officials use this system only for emergency messages. To subscribe, a cellphone user needs to send a text message containing the two words "follow norfolkalerts" to the phone number 40404. Once subscribed, users will receive a confirmation message from the alert system. There is no charge for this service although normal text messaging charges from the wireless phone carrier may apply.

More information on emergency alerts can be found on the City of Norfolk's website at www.ci.norfolk.ne.us/EmergencyAlerts.htm.

"Getting accurate information out to the public is crucial in an emergency situation. It's the responsibility of our citizens to tune into a local radio station as emergency officials will be issuing press releases to those media outlets that will keep them safe," Petersen said.