

Region 22 (Scotts Bluff and Banner Counties) is continually looking to upgrade and improve its outdoor warning sirens. As a review, the sirens are outdoor warning devices that are used to alert people who are out of doors to go indoors and seek shelter, then tune to local radio or television. In addition, it is recommended to have a [NOAA All-Hazards Radio](#) as an "indoor warning siren". In decades past these sirens were installed to warn citizens in the event of an attack on our nation by a foreign power. These days, outdoor sirens are used to warn of an impending locally severe weather event. Some people have asked, "During what kind of weather event are the sirens sounded?" The answer is, simply stated, "a high wind event". Obviously this needs further explanation.

Some may think of sirens as necessary just for tornado warnings, but it's important to note that high speed winds can be comparable to, or faster than, winds produced by a low-rated tornado. Tornadoes range in size, based on wind speed, from an EF0 (65 miles per hour minimum) to an EF5 (200-plus MPH). An EF0 tornado, once on the ground, can be as small as 100 feet in width. Everyone expects the sirens to be activated for any tornado, even a "small" one that is much less than a city block wide.

In comparison, a severe thunderstorm is capable of producing winds of 80 MPH (or greater!), and can cover a width of several miles, which can encompass an entire city at some points. It is imperative to sound the sirens for this type of high speed wind activity as well, due to the potential for both property damage and threat to lives.

This comparison is one that local government officials reviewed when establishing the basis for the storm siren policy (see below). Region 22 activates the sirens for ANY wind event of sufficient speed, regardless of its label - tornado, high winds, straight line winds, or a derecho (a widespread, long-lived, straight-line windstorm that is associated with a fast-moving band of severe thunderstorms). All winds above certain speeds are potentially dangerous, and the Region's policy recognizes this fact: Outdoor sirens will be sounded to warn our citizens who are out of doors to go indoors and seek shelter from the wind. Please see below for specific information on the siren policy.

Severe Storm Siren Activation Policy

Severe Storm Sirens shall be activated when:

- The National Weather Service issues a TORNADO WARNING, OR a trained spotter reports a tornado:
 - In Scotts Bluff County, NE, Banner County, NE or surrounding counties in Nebraska OR Wyoming
 - **AND** the tornado path includes an area with sirens within Region 22
- **Or** the National Weather Service reports a storm producing life threatening **(80 mph or higher)** winds, **AND** the storm path includes an area with sirens within Region 22
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Siren Activation to Warn of an Actual Severe Weather Event

- The sirens sound a steady tone for three minutes.
- The sounding of the sirens means "Move inside immediately and Seek Cover!" Then, tune to local radio, television, or NOAA All-Hazards Radio.
- Each siren activation indicates a tornado/high speed wind event is approaching the City.

- **Neither the Scotts Bluff County Communications Center nor Region 22 Emergency Management sounds an all-clear siren.** Listen to your NOAA All-Hazards Radio or other info source. If one hears another siren, prepare for another threat.
- **DO NOT CALL 911 TO ASK WHY THE SIRENS ARE ACTIVATED.** The communications center is busy enough during normal operations. During emergency operations, they do not have time to answer these questions and you may be putting lives at risk by tying up the 911 staff and phone lines.

Storm Siren Testing

- Storm sirens will be tested between the months of March and October, on the second Wednesday of each month at 1000 hrs.
- The monthly siren test will last for approximately one minute.
- Testing will NOT take place:
 - During times when thunderstorms are predicted in the area, or are actually in the area
 - During freezing weather conditions
 - If the sirens are not tested due to either of the above situations, the sirens will be tested at the next regularly scheduled date and time. There will be no "make-up" test.
- Siren repair - audible testing will only occur following a minimal time period needed to notify the media and public that a siren will be audibly tested. This is usually 24 hours' notice.

We are in need of siren observers that will monitor the sirens during testing and notify us of any malfunctions. If interested, please contact Region 22 Emergency Management at 308-436-6689 or email tnewman@scottsbluff.org.

Any questions should be directed to Region 22 Emergency Management.