

Dane County Emergency Management 2008 All-Hazards Radio Fact Sheet

Introduction:

Dane County uses a combination of methods for alerting the public when severe weather threatens. While the outdoor sirens are an important part of our system, the National Weather Service's all-hazards radio (aka weather radio) network is one of the most timely and reliable components of the system. In fact, the county relies heavily on warnings transmitted via weather radio as the basis for sounding the sirens.

Dane County Emergency Management is introducing a program to distribute quality all-hazards radios to the public. The county will make a bulk purchase of radios and work through local governments to resell them, at cost, to residents.

What is NOAA All-Hazards Radio?

A NOAA All-Hazards radio receives broadcasts exclusively from the National Weather Service. The radio can provide rapid warning, direct from the source, when hazardous weather conditions pose a threat to life and property. It is also an "*all-hazards*" warning system, used not only for immediate flood or tornado related events, but also hazardous materials releases or other localized hazards. The radio receivers behave like smoke detectors, silently monitoring, and then alerting people to the initial warning message immediately upon receipt, providing more time to respond to the event.

In addition, this radio is programmable, allowing the user to set it up to alert for only the event types and locations they are concerned about. Older type weather alert radios did not have this feature but with the programmable features of this radio, this is no longer an issue.

Why is the County Promoting NOAA All-Hazards Radio?

NOAA all-hazards radio is a means of providing direct warning to the public for natural and man-made hazards. NOAA radio is a viable alternative where siren coverage is not available and an excellent indoor enhancement even where siren coverage is available. The radio receiver also provides a warning option for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

However, even with all of the warning advantages these radios provide, the system is an under-utilized resource. In surveys collected through the 2007 pilot program, people consistently reported an awareness of the all-hazards radio system and concerns about receiving severe weather warnings, even in areas where siren coverage is available. In general terms, people were concerned about receiving warnings and knew about the benefits of having an all-hazards radio, but were not motivated to actually make the purchase until the device was offered at cost. This program is designed to continue to provide that pricing incentive, and hopefully motivate more people to purchase these radios and receive warnings directly from the National Weather Service.

The 2007 pilot program was very successful and popular. The Department received many requests from citizens and local government representatives from outside the pilot areas and requested we make this an on-going countywide program.

What is the time frame for this program?

Dane County Emergency Management has already received pricing bids for the bulk purchase. We hope to have the radios in-hand and available for purchase in time for Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week, which is April 21-28.

Who should purchase a NOAA All-Hazards Radio?

We recommend that every household have an all-hazards radio. However, to help people decide, we are providing the following information and suggesting that people ask themselves these questions:

How do you receive severe weather and other public warnings now?

Many people would say they receive these alerts from the outdoor sirens or from warnings broadcast on local television or radio. Are these sources always completely reliable?

Can you always hear the sirens when they are sounded? Indoors? At night, with the windows closed and the air conditioner on? Is the siren loud enough to wake you up when you are sleeping? Is your home within the effective range of a siren?

Likewise, local television and radio is a great way to receive up-to-date warning information, but it works only if your radio or TV is on and tuned to the right station. Again, what about at night when you are sleeping? Or when you happen to be watching a cable or satellite channel that does not carry the local warning information. In those cases, you are very likely to miss the warning.

A NOAA All-Hazards Radio, on the other hand, is designed to be an indoor warning device. It is always on and it will wake you up if you are sleeping.

Do you have a smoke detector? Of course - it alerts you when it detects smoke. An all-hazards radio will alert you to many other immediate, life-threatening hazards in your area, like tornados, floods, and other dangerous events. Without this device, you could miss a critical warning message from that could save your life and those in your family.

About the Radio:

The County's purchasing the Reecom[®] Model R-1630 All-Hazards/Weather Alert Radio. (Click on the Model: R-1630 link at <http://www.reecominc.com/> for details.) Features include:

- Programmable - Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) allows the user to program the radio to alert for only the desired location and warning types
- Battery backup – the radio will still work if power is lost
- Visual display of warning information
- Relay to activate external devices like a bed shaker or strobe light for people who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Includes a jack for an external antenna if needed to improve radio reception
- Alerts by voice announcements or tone

Retail price: \$59.99

County bulk purchase price: \$22.00