TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

Operating Policy and Procedure

OP 76.12: Severe Weather Warning and Alert Systems

DATE: April 12, 2024

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to publicize the function and use of Texas Tech's warning and alert system.

REVIEW: This OP will be reviewed in February of every fourth year by the Chief of Police, the Office of Emergency Management, and the Office of Communications & Marketing with substantive revisions submitted to the Senior Vice President for Administration & Finance and Chief Financial Officer.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1. Severe weather in the form of thunderstorms, damaging hail, high winds, and tornadoes is a threat to the Texas Tech community. Texas Tech maintains several warning and alert systems for use if major storms or other disasters threaten our community. Ideally, sufficient warning time will allow preventative measures to be implemented. However, the unpredictability of weather conditions does not always provide for adequate warning.

2. Weather Hazard Announcements – National Weather Service

There are four severe weather hazard announcements that are issued by the National Weather Service. These announcements and their definitions are:

a. Severe Thunderstorm Watch

A Severe Thunderstorm Watch is issued when severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Severe thunderstorms are defined as follows:

(1) Winds of 58 mph or higher; AND/OR

(2) Hail 1 inch in diameter or larger.

b. Severe Thunderstorm Warning

A Severe Thunderstorm Warning is issued when severe thunderstorms are occurring or imminent in the warning area. Severe thunderstorms are defined as follows:

(1) Winds of 58 mph or higher; AND/OR

(2) Hail 1 inch in diameter or larger.

c. Tornado Watch

A Tornado Watch is issued when severe thunderstorms and tornadoes are **possible** in and near the watch area. It does not mean that they will occur. Severe thunderstorms are defined as follows:

(1) Winds of 58 mph or higher; AND/OR

(2) Hail 1 inch in diameter or larger.

d. Tornado Warning

A Tornado Warning is issued when a tornado is imminent.

3. NOAA Weather Radio

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information from the National Weather Service. Taped weather messages are repeated every two or 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. Texas Tech University Warning Systems

a. Texas Tech University utilizes the City of Lubbock's Outdoor Warning System, which is comprised of sirens located throughout the city and the Texas Tech University campus. These sirens are activated whenever the city and/or campus are in imminent danger. Persons should immediately seek shelter upon hearing the siren.

b. Texas Tech police car sirens and loudspeakers will be used to broadcast alerts and instructions.

c. In the residence halls, alarm klaxons (with a sound distinctively different from that used for fire evacuation procedures) and public address systems (where available) will be used to signal persons to take cover immediately.

d. When a situation presents an imminent danger to the Texas Tech campus, a message will be sent through Texas Tech's Emergency Alert Notification System.

5. Tests of the various warning and alert systems will be conducted twice each year.

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

a. Seek inside shelter, preferably a basement, or inside a steel-framed or reinforced concrete structure (including all major university buildings).

b. Evacuate the upper floors of all buildings.

c. Seek shelter in an interior hallway and stay away from exterior glass.

d. Lie flat on the floor and use tables, mattresses, or blankets for cover.

e. If caught in open country, lie face down in the deepest depression available, such as a ditch, culvert, or ravine.