

Are you storm ready?



Last winter's historic snowstorms dropped record amounts of snow throughout Virginia. Just north, the District of Columbia saw its largest snowstorm in more than 90 years.

Since 2000 there have been ten storm events in Virginia that each resulted in at least one death and one injury. Combined, more than 12 deaths and 13 injuries were reported due to these massive storms, consisting of high winds, lightening, flash flooding, wintry mixes, or a combination of these factors. Local information on significant storms for your locality may be found on the Storm Events tracker portion of the National Climatic Data Center [online](#).

For many, these storms brought to light the need for emergency preparedness. As we enter September, Virginia is in the midst of peak hurricane and flood season. Therefore it's not surprising that National Preparedness Month (NPM) and National Emergency Preparedness Week are both recognized each September. This year Virginia is one of the top states in which localities are being recognized as StormReady®.

The StormReady® program

The National Weather Service's (NWS) StormReady® program is designed to help communities better protect citizens during severe weather. The program is voluntary and free, and is offered to provide guidance and incentives to officials interested in improving their hazardous weather operations.

Communities who complete StormReady® guidelines and go through the process are awarded StormReady® recognition in the form of StormReady® road signs, online listings, and press releases distributed by newly recognized communities. This increases the visibility of their efforts to their citizens and, according to the NWS, "StormReady® tells the community that their emergency management staff takes safety seriously."

StormReady® was developed to:

- Improve the timeliness and effectiveness of hazardous weather warnings for the public;
- Provide detailed and clear recommendations to help local emergency managers establish and improve effective hazardous weather operations;
- Help local emergency managers justify costs and purchases needed to support their hazardous weather-related program;
- Reward local hazardous-weather mitigation programs that have achieved a desired performance level;
- Provide a means of acquiring additional Community Rating System points assigned by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) ;
- Provide an image incentive to communities, which once certified, can identify themselves as StormReady®; and

- Encourage the enhancement of hazardous weather preparedness programs in jurisdictions surrounding StormReady® communities and counties.

Virginia has 32 recognized StormReady® communities, including one which is certified as tsunami-ready. Virginia Tech is also a recognized StormReady® university. Virginia was one of the top states with newly recognized StormReady® communities in 2010, with the counties of Buckingham, King George, Washington, Wise and York, the City of Roanoke, and Virginia Tech University becoming StormReady®.

Virginia StormReady® entities

- Accomack, County of
- Arlington, County of
- Bedford, City of
- Buckingham, County of
- Campbell, County of
- Chesapeake, City of
- Chesterfield, County of
- Colonial Heights , City of
- Danville
- Fairfax, County of
- Giles, , County of
- Gloucester, County of
- Greene, County of
- Hampton, City of
- King George, County of
- Lancaster, County of
- Loudoun , County of
- Norfolk, City of (also tsunami ready!)
- Page , County of
- Portsmouth, City of
- Prince William, County of
- Richmond, City of
- Roanoke, City of
- Rockbridge, County of
- Russell, County of
- Newport News, City of
- Virginia Beach, City of
- Virginia Tech
- Washington, County of
- Williamsburg, City of
- Wise, County of
- York, County of

Get StormReady®!

If your entity is interested in becoming StormReady®, the NWS has developed a StormReady Toolkit for Emergency Managers, available [online](#). The toolkit provides overview of the StormReady® program, walking members through the application process, answering questions, and providing resources for more assistance.

Example items an entity must complete to become StormReady® include:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center;
- Have more than one way to receive severe weather warnings and forecasts and to alert the public;
- Create a system that monitors weather conditions;
- Locally promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars; and
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

For more information contact your local NWS office, you can find a listing on the [NWS Web site](#).

Get prepared!

In addition to becoming StormReady® recognized, member entities can take other steps to increase preparedness this hurricane season. VML Insurance Programs has compiled a listing of quick tips and Web sites of interest to aid you in your preparedness planning.

Tips and sites of interest

- Visit the [National Weather Service](#) home page for information on weather patterns and forecasts. Visit the [National Hurricane Center](#) page for up to specific threat updates.
- Utilize the [U.S. Census Bureau data](#) to obtain population information for your community – you may need this for your StormReady® application.
- The [Ready campaign](#), produced by The Advertising Council, provides information to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. More information is available [online](#) and by calling: TTY (800) 462-7585 or (888) SE-LISTO.
- Stress personal preparedness! By stressing personal preparedness for your employees they will be ready to focus on those most in need during disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has compiled materials on individual preparedness, as well as information specific to seniors, businesses, young audiences, pet owners, and various special need populations.
- Communicate! Educate your community members and employees about the types of emergencies that could occur and how to respond. Better yet, put together a program of activities to prepare for and respond to disaster.
- Visit [Ready Virginia](#), a site loaded with checklists and tips for personal preparedness planning you can share with your audiences.

Featured Resources

VML Insurance Programs has many resources available for members to utilize on a wide range of subjects and in various forms of media. This month's featured resources focus on emergency preparedness in recognition of National Preparedness Month.

Featured media: Are you ready? What lawyers need to know about emergency preparedness and disaster recovery. Available for loan >> [URL](#)

Online University: Emergency and disaster preparedness. Schedule online >> [URL](#)
Click on the link above to go to the Online University home page. Login to the website, select "Access Online University" from the Member Home Page and select the above title from the Public Safety courses.