

"If people repeatedly hear severe weather warnings for their community when there is no real threat, they may start ignoring the alerts. When severe weather does occur, they may be caught off

Cleburne County LINES

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County Alert & Notification System Is Best Source Of Emergency Information

Cleburne County's Emergency Alert and Notification System consists of emergency alert radios, outdoor warning sirens, Alabama SAF-T-Net and the Emergency Alert System (EAS). The EAS is a coordinated effort among the National Weather Service and TV and radio broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio

radio service (SDARS) providers, direct broadcast satellite (DBS) service providers and wireline video service providers. Cleburne EMA works closely with local EAS partners to provide information before, during and after a disaster.

Learning more about Cleburne County's Alert and Notification

System is an important step in creating your family's emergency preparedness plan.

To learn more about emergency preparedness, call Cleburne EMA at 256.463.7130, look for Cleburne EMA on Facebook or visit the EMA/911 section of www.cleburnecounty.us.

Cleburne County Adopts Storm-Based Warnings

Have you ever heard an outdoor warning siren but only saw clear skies overhead? It may be because somewhere in the county there is a real threat for severe weather, but not for your community. Cleburne County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) will transition to a new, polygon-based warning system to replace county wide warnings by June 1, 2012.

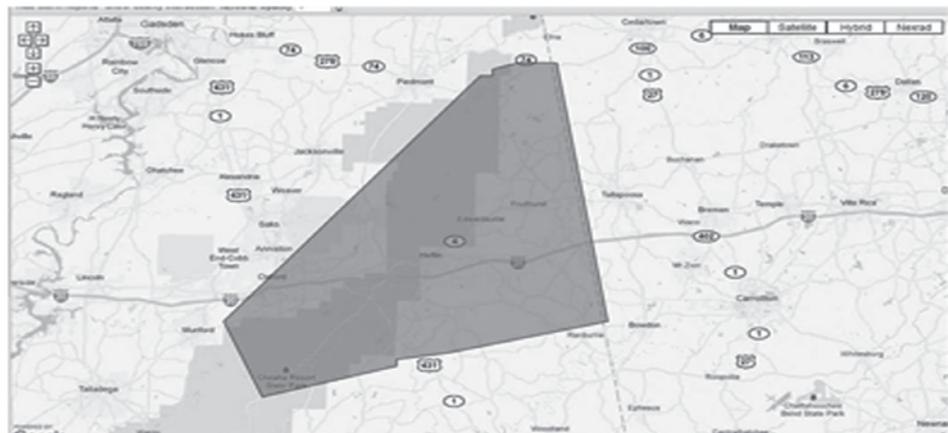
Residents have seen polygon weather warnings on television and internet weather maps for years. The National Weather Service (NWS) capabilities enable them to identify locations most likely to be affected by severe weather. NWS continually monitors radar, following storms and watching for signs of severe weather threats. At the point when most storms become severe, forecasters have been following them for awhile and know where the storms will track and how they will behave. NWS forecasters then draw a polygon that defines

(continued on page 2)

inside

Emergency Alert System	2
Emergency Alert Radios	3
SAF-T-Net	4
Facebook	5

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Storm Based Warnings (continued from page 1)

the locations that are threatened by the storm.

“If people repeatedly hear severe weather warnings for their community when there is no real threat, they may start ignoring the alerts. When severe weather does occur, they may be caught off-guard,” said County Administrator Steve Swafford. “When an outdoor warning siren sounds, you should take it seriously. Go indoors and tune to a local EAS radio or television station to learn more about hazardous conditions.”

Swafford added that residents should not rely on outdoor warning sirens as their primary source of alerts.



Know Your Local EAS TV And Radio Stations

Cleburne County EMA works closely with local radio and television stations to provide information before, during and after a disaster. Perform a test of these stations now to determine which stations are received best in your community.

Keep a portable radio with extra batteries in your disaster supply kit. In the event of an electrical power outage, you can continue to monitor an EAS radio station for news and updates about hazardous conditions.



Cleburne County EAS Radio And Television Stations

Radio

WVOK FM 97.9
WTDR FM 92.7
WJCK FM 88.3

Television

WBRC Fox 6
WVTM NBC 13
WJSU ABC 33/40
WIAT CBS 42

Changes Made To County's Outdoor Warning Sirens

Since 1996, a network of outdoor warning sirens expanded across western Cleburne County largely through funds from the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP). The CSEPP sirens were primarily meant to alert residents in the event of a chemical weapons accident at the Anniston Army Depot. The federal program allowed the county EMA to use the sirens to provide alerts about severe weather and other hazards. With the end of the chemical weapons stockpile destruction in September 2011, federal funding for the sirens has ended too.

(continued on page 4)



Outdoor warning sirens are tested on the first Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. If severe weather conditions exist, the test will not be conducted.

Outdoor warning sirens are activated around-the-clock for tornado warnings. For severe thunderstorm warnings, they are activated between 5 a.m. -11 p.m. Severe thunderstorms can create hazards such as lightning, hail, heavy rain, flash flooding and high winds.

More Than 90 Percent Of Homes Have EARs

Since 2009, Cleburne County EMA has been distributing Emergency Alert Radios (EARs) to homes, schools, churches, businesses and other locations throughout the county. More than 90 percent of county residents have received an EAR. The program was funded through the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP).

The EAR, or weather alert radio, provides a way for residents to receive emergency alerts while indoors. The EARs receive information through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Radio (NWR) All Hazards network. The nationwide network broadcasts warnings, watches, forecasts and other hazard information directly from the nearest National Weather Service office 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Along with severe weather alerts, NWR also broadcasts information about public safety and man-made hazards.

“By providing an emergency alert device that is linked to an existing network, there is no further cost to the county or state after an EAR is distributed,” said County Administrator Steve Swafford. The transition from the tone alert radio, which was a specialized CSEPP technology available to a limited number of people, to the EAR created an estimated cost-savings of \$5 million to the CSEP Program.

Your EAR should not be turned off. Disasters can strike at any time; you and your family may have to take protective actions quickly. Make sure your EAR is programmed to receive alerts for Cleburne County. The county code is 001029. Keep fresh batteries in your EAR so it can continue to provide alerts during a power outage.

If you need programming assistance with your EAR or if you live in Cleburne County and have not yet received an EAR, contact Cleburne EMA at 256.463.7130. A limited quantity of EARs are still available.

Alabama Unveils New Weather Alert System

In February 2012, Gov. Robert Bentley announced a new, fully-automated weather alerting system available to Alabamians. Baron Services, Inc., an Alabama-based weather technology company, has provided its technology to the State and its residents at no cost. Alabama SAF-T-Net uses a combination of phone, email and text messages to provide alerts ahead of a storm.

Alabama SAF-T-Net is a multi-source network which includes:

- National Weather Service storm-based tornado, severe thunderstorm and flash flood warnings

- Baron patented advisories for strong or dangerous twisting storms

- Mitigation messaging from Emergency Management

- Breaking weather updates from media partners

Residents can sign up online to receive alerts via phone, email or text messaging for up to four locations. While there is no charge to sign up for SAF-T-Net, cellular carrier charges for text messages and data usage may apply. If you do not have a cell phone, you can sign up to receive tornado warnings on your land-line phone. Mobile apps are avail-

able for iPhones and Droid smart phones.

To sign up for Alabama SAF-T-Net, visit www.alabamasaftnet.com. If you need assistance signing up for the service, contact Baron at 256.881.8811.



Sirens *(continued from page 3)*

Of the county's 17 CSEPP-funded sirens, five have been dismantled and five were moved to other communities who assumed responsibility for the sirens' maintenance. Some sirens remain in southwest Cleburne County where Hollis Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department has taken responsibility for them. Some outdoor warning sirens in the county were purchased and maintained with mitigation grants and local funding; those sirens are not affected by CSEPP. Cleburne EMA will continue to conduct the monthly test and activate the sirens.

"The outdoor warning sirens are meant to alert people who are outdoors. They were not meant to provide alerts to people in their homes or to serve as a primary source for alerts," said County Administrator Steve Swafford, who also serves as Director of Cleburne EMA.

More than 90 percent of homes in Cleburne County have received emergency alert radios. Residents also can sign up to receive alerts through email, text message and cell phone apps.



Facebook Proves To Be An Interactive Resource For EMA And Cleburne County Residents

Cleburne EMA has passed another unique milestone. The agency has more than 4,200 friends on Facebook's social media site. That's a large online network for a rural county with less than 6,000 households (U.S. Census 2010).

Before, during and after an emergency, Cleburne EMA's Facebook friends receive information in real-time. Whether it's severe weather or another hazard threatening the county, EMA can share and receive information quickly.

"From a public safety standpoint, it's an invaluable tool," said Patrick Nolen, who serves as the Chief of Turkey Heaven Volunteer Fire Department and an Alternate Director of the Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments. "As an example, during the severe winter weather of 2011, EMA posted not only weather warnings but road closings and other information county agencies needed to share with the public. EMA also encouraged residents to act as our 'eyes' around the county. Facebook friends were posting reports of hazards like downed trees on roads and power lines. It was information emergency responders needed but we might not have gotten so quickly."

After the danger has passed, EMA can keep Facebook friends updated on the recovery efforts and what residents need to do to stay safe in their communities. Even when a disaster doesn't directly affect Cleburne County, EMA shares information about regional recovery efforts.

"After the April 27th tornadoes, many residents, first responders and local agencies wanted to help the victims in other counties. Cleburne EMA passed along information from County EMAs, the Red Cross and other organizations who were leading the clean-up and recovery efforts. It helped our local volunteers identify the best ways to help the storm victims," added Nolen.

Jackie Howle said she always checks the EMA page for weather updates and other safety information. Howle is a Ranburne resident and Executive Director of HEARTS, a local nonprofit, community outreach resource center. "It's also very positive for HEARTS. Whenever we post an event or identify a need, EMA often shares the post on their Facebook page which helps us reach even more people. I appreciate the support of our county officials and EMA's Facebook page is another great resource they provide for us."

Even during calmer times, EMA posts almost daily with weather forecasts, county events and links to local news. When asked how he uses the EMA page, Fruithurst resident Ricky Kilgore said he checks the page often not only for the weather but also for news updates on county politics and plans. Other Facebook friends are people who have moved from Cleburne County and who use the EMA page to keep up with county events.

"With so many people receiving their information through social media, we wanted to take full advantage of it as a resource to keep our residents informed. It also gives them an opportunity to post information and ask questions of EMA," said Steve Swafford, County Administrator. "Using Facebook has provided even better results than we expected. In February, we had more than 4,000 friends and the number just keeps growing."



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To the CLEBURNE COUNTY RESIDENT at

Need to Know More?

As part of its effort to encourage emergency planning for residents and business owners, Cleburne EMA produces publications such as a family emergency preparedness guide, the Cleburne County Lines newsletter and a county calendar. To find preparedness information online, visit www.cleburnecounty.us or look for Cleburne EMA on Facebook.

Along with these publications, EMA has produced an emergency preparedness guide and newsletter for people with physical, medical and other special needs that could create extra challenges when preparing for, responding to and recovering from a disaster. A brochure about

registering your physical, medical and other special needs information with EMA and 911 also is available.

EMA's publications are distributed at public locations throughout the county such as the County Courthouse, Ranburne Town Hall, Heflin City Hall and Recreation Center, HEARTS offices in Ranburne and Heflin and the local Department of Human Resources. You can contact EMA at 256.463.7130 for more information.

