



NOAA, NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE, WEATHER FORECAST OFFICE

Miami, Florida 33165



Miami, FL: May 13, 1997 (AP Photo/Miami Herald)

Wednesday January 27th: Tornado and Thunderstorm Awareness Day

Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are more frequent in south Florida than most people realize. Since 1971, south Florida has averaged a total of 10 tornadoes per year. In fact, since 1996 seven tornadoes of EF-1 or EF-2 intensity on the Enhanced Fujita Scale have affected southeast Florida. Tornadoes have also been observed more frequently during El Niño episodes such as the one we're currently in, particularly during the winter and spring months. During an El Niño of similar magnitude in March 2003, an EF-2 tornado with winds in excess of 115 mph ripped through the Brownsville and Liberty City areas of Miami, killing one, injuring 14 and causing damage to over 400 structures totaling \$8 million.

Tornadoes are also fairly common in the outer rain bands of tropical cyclones, as was the case in 2008 when an outer band of Tropical Storm Fay produced an ef-2 tornado in Wellington.

The relatively small and short-lived nature of most south Florida tornadoes means that it is very difficult to give plenty of advance warning. In many cases, only a few minutes of warning are given between the time a warning is issued by the national weather service and the tornado touchdown. Nevertheless, even a few minutes of warning can make the difference between life and death. Having a NOAA Weather Radio is a critical component of the warning system. Having a weather radio available to alert of an approaching tornado has saved lives. When a tornado threatens your area, stay inside and go to an interior room without windows. In a multi-story building, go to the lowest floor.

When a tornado or severe thunderstorm has been detected either through National Weather Service Doppler weather radar or a trained SKYWARN™ storm spotter, the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Miami will issue a warning. Warnings are communicated directly from the National Weather Service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through NOAA All Hazards Radio, through the internet at www.weather.gov/southFlorida and through local media by way of the emergency alert system.

As part of Florida's Severe Weather Awareness Week, the National Weather Service and the Florida Division of Emergency Management will conduct a statewide tornado drill on Wednesday, January 27th. Schools, hospitals and businesses throughout south Florida are encouraged to participate by conducting a tornado drill at their individual location, putting their severe weather emergency preparedness plan into effect. This will give school administrators and safety officers an opportunity to see how effective their preparedness plan actually is. If your school or business does not have a severe weather preparedness plan, contact your county office of emergency management or the National Weather Service for assistance.

Here are the plans for the January 27 tornado drill in south Florida:

At 800 AM, the tornado drill will begin when all of south Florida will be considered to be under a test tornado watch. No products will be issued at this time. This is the appropriate time to announce the watch to staff and students, assign coordinators and evacuate tornado vulnerable areas. All participants in the drill are urged to turn on their NOAA Weather radios shortly after 800 am and be ready to activate emergency procedures once the test warning message is received.

At 1010 AM, a test tornado warning will be issued by the National Weather Service Miami Forecast Office for all counties in south Florida including Miami-Dade, Broward,

Palm Beach, Collier, Hendry and Glades. NOAA Weather Radio will broadcast the warning using the same routine weekly test code used for the weekly tests normally conducted on Wednesdays. Upon receipt of the message, the coordinator will determine the threat.

At 1020 AM, upon determination of the threat, either a “take shelter” or “duck and cover” command will be given, depending on available space.

The watch and warning will terminate at **1030 AM**. No formal notification will be given by the national weather service to end the test warning.