

**CROSSVILLE**



# **Crossville Fire Rescue**

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*Office of the Fire Chief*

Friday, April 19, 2024

The State of Tennessee already has a mass notification Weather Emergency Alert (WEA) system in place for our area to alert cell phones in the region. This system was implemented this past season and will be very beneficial for our community during this weather season. The system does not require users/citizens to sign up as it will alert a specific geographic area automatically. The citizens who are directly in the NWS polygon alert area who will be directly affected by the storm track will receive the alert. The alert will not go to unaffected citizens who are outside the projected storm path and thus will cut down on fear and anxiety for people who do not need to take protective action (i.e. storm affecting Rennie will not alert Crossville and other areas). If you receive an alert, you should take immediate action to protect yourself from the storm. Certain NWS warnings go out automatically via WEA, provided they have that technology on their phone AND have WEA turned on. When these alerts occur, they override the phone's volume and have a piercing alert tone to get the user's attention. (Similar to an AMBER alert). The alert is followed by critical information and actions the user should take for their safety.

Weather Emergency Alerts people around here may receive from us are:

- Tornado Warnings (all)
- Flash Flood Warnings (not all warnings, Considerable and Catastrophic only)
- Severe Thunderstorm Warnings (Destructive storms only...baseball size hail and damaging winds of 80 mph or higher)

Additionally, the efficiency of alerting technology is so advanced in our society and readily abundant, both free of charge or for a small fee, that the generic weather alerting siren system is only recommended for outdoor venues. A weather alert siren will sound for an outdoor area but will not provide any information. As well, the siren will only alert if a storm receives a warning status from the National Weather Service. The last two (2) tornadoes in our area did not receive a warning from NWS until very late in the event and would have likely not had a warning siren in time to have made an impact on safety.

The expense and maintenance of an outdoor warning siren is immense and is not the most effective and cost-efficient means to protect our citizens. I will give several

examples of economically beneficial systems that can help protect our citizens during severe weather events.

1. Many of our local weather/news agencies have very good weather applications that can be downloaded and used free of charge on cell phones, tablets and computers. The Knoxville weather market has several from WVLT, WBIR and WATE. The NWS and Weather Channel have apps for use as well.
2. Mark Baldwin, Crossville Fire Meteorologist, has a free application for download and he readily provides up to date information on our area in times of severe weather.
3. Crossville/Cumberland County Emergency Management has an app that will provide real time information for our community as well. It is tied to the NWS and will alert during severe weather.
4. National Weather Service (NWS) weather radios are inexpensive and can be obtained in multiple configurations from battery-portable to fixed electric. These range typically from \$30-\$100 depending on the model and user's needs. These will alert automatically when a warned storm occurs and give protection action information.
5. Currently, the City of Crossville pays for and utilizes WeatherTap Pro subscription for several agencies in the city government. Specifically, Parks and Recreation has access to the high-resolution radar and lightning data for the protection of our outdoor recreation venues.

With the abundance of efficient options for our city and for our citizens to utilize, I feel that the outdoor sirens for severe weather will not be the best option to adequately protect our area. The sirens do not provide real time action-oriented information that is beneficial for safety. The current State of Tennessee WEA system is in place and active. It will alert smartphones and regular cell phones as well. In addition, I feel we should recommend apps for our technology friendly users that will keep them well informed on weather events. I feel that we should recommend NWS Weather alert radios for our citizens who do not feel comfortable with app-based cell phone systems. It is my understanding that Creative Compassion has a weather radio program in place for persons who can not afford to purchase one. This might be a worthwhile program for us to partner with to help further support our citizens.

Crossville Fire Rescue and Crossville Cumberland County EMA take the protection of our citizens very seriously. We strongly recommend that our citizens have multiple ways to receive severe weather alerts and watch the weather closely during suspected times of potential severe outbreaks. Anyone planning an outdoor event should watch the weather closely and take action accordingly to protect the people in attendance.

Sincerely,

Chief Chris South