May 4, 2010
For Immediate Release

Get ahead of the storm – Invest in a NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards

(MADISON) Governor Doyle has declared May 12, 2010 as NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards Awareness Day. The campaign is to encourage Wisconsin residents to keep ahead of severe weather by tuning into NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, a 24-hour source of weather forecasts, watches, warnings, and non-weather emergency information provided by the National Weather Service and its parent agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Weather radios are known as "smoke detectors for severe weather and hazardous conditions." A NOAA Weather Radio with an alarm and battery back-up is one of the best ways to protect your family, especially at night when the alarm feature can wake you up during severe weather and give you and your family time to seek appropriate shelter. If there is no severe weather then your weather radio can be switched to a silent, stand-by mode.

The NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards network started in 1972 and is the sole government-operated radio system to provide direct warnings for all hazardous conditions that pose a threat to lives and property. There are 37 stations that broadcast weather and hazards information to the residents of Wisconsin, and over 1,000 stations nationwide.

Weather radios come in many sizes, with a variety of functions and costs. They can be purchased at most electronic stores. Most weather radio receivers are either battery-operated portables or AC-powered desktop models with battery backup. The portable weather radios are an important item to take along when you are enjoying the outdoors such as camping and boating. Many receivers have digital technology called Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) that allows users to program their radios to alarm only for hazardous conditions that affect their county.

A weather radio is an essential part of a severe weather safety plan. Every home, business, and public area should have a NOAA Weather Radio.

FACT SHEET

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards: On Alert For All Emergencies

Saving lives is the focus of NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards by providing immediate broadcasts of severe weather warnings and civil emergency messages and giving those in harm's way critical lead time to respond and remain safe. Broadcasts of tornado warnings, flood warnings, AMBER Alerts for child abductions, chemical spill messages and many other notifications, in addition to routine weather observations and forecasts, make NOAA Weather Radio an essential item for every home, business and public area.

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, a component of the nation's Emergency Alert System, is comprised of a nationwide network of more than 970 transmitters directly linked with one of the 123 local offices of NOAA's National Weather Service, which issues weather warnings and relays civil emergency messages on behalf of law enforcement agencies. NOAA Weather Radio is provided as a public service by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Selection of NOAA Weather Radio receivers available at electronic retailers.

Features of NOAA Weather Radio

- **Tone Alarm:** Special tones precede the initial broadcast of all emergency announcements regarding immediate weather threats and civil emergency messages to gain a listener's attention. These tones will also activate radios that are on alert mode, yet silent. This feature is especially crucial when severe storms or other events occur at night when most people are sound asleep.
- **Size:** Units are small (about the size of a clock radio) and require little space on a nightstand or table. They travel easily (vacations, relocations) and will use the signal from a nearby transmitter.
- **Battery Backup:** Ensures continued service during a loss of electricity, which can disable the warning capabilities of television and the Internet.
- **Customization:** Most models featuring SAME (Specific Area Message Encoding) technology can be programmed to sound only select alerts for select areas—in essence, blocking undesired messages, especially those that apply outside the local area.
- **Accessories:** Many radios allow customization for an external antenna to improve reception; and for devices for the hearing or visually impaired, such as strobe lights, pagers, or bed shakers.

Receivers carrying the **Public Alert** logo meet certain performance criteria

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including SAME and a battery backup.

Purchasing NOAA Weather Radios

Units that receive the NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards signal are available at many electronic retail stores, marine supply stores, mail order catalogs and the Internet. Prices vary by model and available options, but typically range between $20 and $80.

NOAA Weather Radio Success Stories

- Severe weather raking parts of Mississippi on April 6, 2005, prompted NOAA's National Weather Service to issue a tornado warning for Smith County. In the tornado's path was the Mize Attendance Center (a Kindergarten through 12th grade complex). Alan Gerard, warning coordination meteorologist with NOAA's National Weather Service in Jackson, Miss., said "the school principals received the tornado warning via NOAA Weather Radio. Once the warning was issued, they activated their emergency plan, which included getting all of the students on the upper level down into the lower level interior hallways." While the tornado tore off the building's roof and damaged the upper floor and windows, there were no injuries among the 650 students.

- Charles F. Johnson Elementary School in Endicott, N.Y., reaped the benefits of NOAA Weather Radio on June 6, 2005. Thunderstorm winds of up to 70 mph tore the roof off of the kindergarten wing and devastated the building. The National Weather Service office in Binghamton, N.Y., issued a severe thunderstorm warning 22 minutes before the storm struck the school. The warning activated the alarm on the school's All Hazards receiver and gave school officials enough time to evacuate 340 students, faculty, and staff to designated "storm-safe" areas. "Over 20 minutes of advanced warning allowed us to execute our severe weather safety plan, which in turn saved lives and prevented injuries," said William Tomic, principal of Charles F. Johnson Elementary School.

- When an AMBER Alert, relayed by the Illinois State Police in August 2006, was broadcast over NOAA Weather Radio, it triggered the Emergency Alert System and the alert was transmitted to commercial radio stations. Listening to the radio at the time, the suspect described in the alert heard the message, contacted the authorities and turned himself in.

- When John Norwood, employee at the Mohon International casework manufacturing plant in Paris, Tenn., heard a tornado warning over NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards on November 15, 2005 he wasted no time in warning the plant. The warning was issued 13 minutes before a strong F2 tornado touched down five miles southwest of Paris. Several more life-saving minutes would pass before it ripped into the Mohon plant. By that time, Plant Safety Officer Revita Walker had already taken action, thanks to the early warning. "I got on the public address system and made the announcement to head to the storm shelters. There was a good 10 minutes to spare and some people didn't really believe it - because the tornado wasn't right on top of us," said Walker. When the tornado struck, approximately 250 employees were huddled in the plant's pre-designated safe areas. Walker added, "I heard the roof coming off and things started flying." Early warning and NOAA Weather Radio, combined with the plant's emergency preparedness planning, undoubtedly saved many lives that day.

- An AMBER Alert issued in Texas following the kidnapping of a 14-year-old girl from Nevada in October 2002 was heard by a truck driver over NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards. The driver spotted the white pickup truck described in the alert and dialed 911. Officers from Atascosa County, Texas, responded and pulled over the pickup truck. The kidnapped child was found inside, in good condition, and the two suspects were placed in custody.

- A tornado warning heard over NOAA Weather Radio activated the severe weather plan of the Parsons Manufacturing plant near Roanoke, Ill., on July 13, 2004. Timely warning of an approaching severe thunderstorm and the tornado it produced and the foresight of the plant owner in developing and implementing a severe weather plan gave workers extra minutes to take shelter before an F-4 tornado demolished the 250,000-square-foot plant. Not a single injury was suffered by any of the more than 140 employees.

Visit the NOAA Weather Radio Web site: http://www.weather.gov/nwr