



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSCEP OP: 76.15, **Severe Weather Warning and Alert Systems**

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso) Operating Policy and Procedure is to publicize the function and use of TTUHSC El Paso's warning and alert system.

REVIEW: This Operating Policy/Procedure will be reviewed by February 1 of every fourth year (E4Y) by the Chief of Police, the Vice President for Information Technology or designee, and the TTUHSC El Paso Emergency Management Coordinator, with recommendations for revisions submitted to the Chief Financial Officer or designee by February 15.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. Severe weather in the form of thunderstorms, damaging hail, high winds, and tornadoes are a threat to the Texas Tech community. TTUHSC El Paso maintains several warning and alert systems for use in the event major storms or other disasters threaten our community. Ideally, sufficient warning time will allow precautionary measures to be implemented. The unpredictability of weather conditions, however, does not always provide for adequate warning.
2. **Weather Hazard Announcements - National Weather Service.** There are four severe weather hazard announcements which are issued by the National Weather Service. These announcements and their definitions are:
 - a. Severe Thunderstorm Watch
Thunderstorms are expected which could be considered severe. A "severe" thunderstorm contains either damaging winds (surface gusts greater than 75 mph) or hail stones at least 3/4 inch in diameter, or both.
 - b. Severe Thunderstorm Warning
A severe thunderstorm has actually been sighted or is indicated by radar.
 - c. Tornado Watch
One or more tornadoes are expected to be generated by the severe thunderstorms.
 - d. Tornado Warning
A tornado has been sighted in the area or is indicated by radar.
3. **National Oceanic and Atmospheric (NOAA) Weather Radio.** The NOAA of the U.S. Department of Commerce provide continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information from the National Weather Service. Taped weather messages are repeated every two to three minutes and are revised on an hourly basis. When circumstances warrant, specially designed warning receivers (weather alert radios) can be activated. The weather alert radios sound an alarm indicating that an emergency exists, alerting the listener to turn the receiver up to an audible volume. Personnel in departments where the weather alert radios are located are expected to convey the message received to all other people in the area or building.
4. **TTUHSC El Paso Warning System.**
 - a. Texas Tech El Paso Police Department (TTEPPD) car sirens and loudspeakers may be used to broadcast alerts and instructions.

- b. The public address system will be used to signal persons to take cover immediately.
 - c. The RAVE -Raider Shield Alert system will be used to warn faculty, staff, and students at the affected campus to take immediate cover or provide instructions regarding other appropriate actions.
5. **Special Codes used by TTUHSC El Paso** In the University buildings, the following codes have been assigned to weather conditions announced by the National Weather Service affecting El Paso County.
- a. Severe Weather Watch
Conditions are **favorable** for severe thunderstorms or tornadoes.
 - b. Severe Weather Warning
This code is for a tornado **warning** or a severe thunderstorm **warning**; tornadoes or heavy hail and high winds have been reported in El Paso or the surrounding areas, but not necessarily in the immediate vicinity of TTUHSC El Paso.
 - c. Code Brown
TTUHSC El Paso is in immediate danger of an approaching tornado or severe winds with heavy hail and rain.
- Code Brown is the highest degree of severe weather alerts, and measures will be taken at this point to protect students, faculty, staff and patients. This code will be announced upon authorization of the TTEPPD.***

6. **Responsibilities During “Code Brown.”**

- a. Personnel
 - (1) Upon hearing “Code Brown,” you should seek shelter **immediately**. Employees in the building not directly involved in patient care should evacuate to the basement, interior offices, interior stairwells, and/or interior hallways away from all outside windows, using posted emergency evacuation routes.
 - (2) **Do not use** elevators for evacuation purposes.
 - (3) **Do not go** into an area where highly flammable or combustible liquids or gases are stored or where equipment might fall and cause injury.
 - (4) **Do not go** outside.
 - (5) Lie flat on the floor and use tables, mattresses, or blankets for cover.
- b. Patients
 - (1) Patients should be evacuated to an area of safety inside the clinics, interior offices, interior stairwells, and/or interior hallways. In speeding up the evacuation process, support departments have been assigned to assist (see 6.c., Clinical Assistance).
 - (2) **Do not use** elevators for evacuation purposes.
 - (3) **Do not go** into an area where highly flammable or combustible liquids or gases are stored or where equipment might fall and cause injury.

- (4) High-risk patients who cannot be moved must be placed in areas of safety, covered with extra blankets, pillows, etc. and moved away from glass.

- c. Clinical Assistance

In the event a clinic needs additional personnel to assist in the relocation of their patients, they are to call 915 215-7111 and inform the TTEPPD Police Dispatcher of their needs. Support personnel will be assigned to assist.

In the event a Code Brown is announced, the following departments will send all available personnel to TTEPPD for assignment to needed areas: Plant Operations, General Services, Copy and Mail, and Safety Services. Once an assignment has been completed, the individual will return to TTEPPD for additional assignments.

- d. Termination of "Code Brown"

When the "Code Brown" has been terminated by TTEPPD, the announcement will be made over the public announcement loudspeaker system and through the RAVE-Raider Shield Alert system.

7. **Departmental Responsibilities During "Severe Weather Watch."**

- a. Spot check to determine if patients or visitors are frightened or alarmed during a **"Severe Weather Watch"** and take action deemed necessary to comfort and reassure them.
- b. Determine what assistance you will need and contact the department that has been assigned to assist you, so they can be prepared in the event the weather becomes more severe. If you do not have an assigned department and need assistance, contact the TTEPPD Police Department.
- c. Check your posted Emergency Evacuation Plan, to determine the route to an area of safety in case the need to evacuate arises.
- d. Employees not at their normal work stations should report to their assigned work area and contact their supervisor.
- e. Review responsibilities with personnel in the area.

8. **Departmental Responsibilities During "Severe Weather Warning."**

- a. Spot check to determine if patients or visitors are frightened or alarmed during a **"Severe Weather Warning"** and take action deemed necessary to comfort and reassure them.
- b. Determine what assistance you will need and contact the department that has been assigned to assist you, so they can be prepared in the event the weather becomes more severe. If you do not have an assigned department and need assistance, contact TTEPPD.
- c. Check your posted Emergency Evacuation Plan in case you have to evacuate.
- d. Determine the route to an area of safety in case the need to evacuate arises.
- e. Supervise the removal of obstacles from corridors.
- f. Review responsibilities with personnel in the area.

- g. Employees not at their normal work station should report to their assigned work area and notify their supervisor.
- 9. Tests of the various warning and alert systems will be conducted by March 15 of each year. The tests will be well publicized and coordinated through TTEPPD and Institutional Affairs (IA) in advance of the tests.
- 10. The Department of Safety Services will distribute informational literature on tornado procedures in all University buildings by March 1.
- 11. If a tornado warning is issued or a tornado is sighted, the following action should be taken:
 - a. Seek inside shelter, preferably a tornado cellar, steel framed or reinforced concrete structure (including all major University buildings).
 - b. Evacuate upper floors of all buildings.
 - c. Seek shelter in an interior hallway and stay away from windows.
 - d. Lie flat on the floor and use tables, mattresses, or blankets for cover.
 - e. If caught in open country, lay face down in the deepest depression available such as a ditch, culvert, or ravine.