



Gadsden / Etowah County *Emergency Management Agency*

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NEWS RELEASE

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Storm Threat and COVID-19 Crisis

With the potential for severe weather in our area on Sunday, the Gadsden/Etowah County Emergency Management Agency (GECEMA) wants to remind everyone we are now in the heart of the Alabama severe weather season. Threats, such as these, are not uncommon in Alabama. The difference in this threat and previous storm threats is the addition of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, the GECEMA wants to let all citizens know what proactive steps are being taken to provide for citizen safety – from both the potential of severe weather and COVID-19.

Due to the pandemic, there are only certain storm shelters that will be open for public use. The shelters that will open are those “hardened structures – built by FEMA P-361 guidelines.” Therefore, “safe havens” or “refuges of last resort” will not be open – such as community centers, church basements, etc. The safest place to be in a storm is still in a sturdy site-built home. Locate a position of safety on the lowest floor, innermost part of the house, putting as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Also, stay away from doors and window. If you live in a manufactured home, you must leave that location long before the storm arrives and take shelter in a sturdy structure, with family or friends.

In light of COVID-19, if you must use a local FEMA built shelter, you must wear a mask and gloves in the storm shelter. We ask that you provide your own as not all shelters are able to provide this equipment for you. As best as possible, maintain a distance of 6-feet from others. It is up to each individual to decide whether the risk of the Coronavirus or the threat from the storm is greater...and act accordingly.

The following storm shelters will be open in the event a tornado watch is issued on Sunday:
Coates Bend – Macedonia Road, Coates Bend Fire Department, East Gadsden, Alabama City, Attalla, Cave Springs, Altoona, Egypt, Walnut Grove, New Union, Gallant Fire Department, Glencoe, and Southside. For more information on these shelters, visit www.shelteretowah.com.

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