



## Kingman County Commission

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### **Awareness key during severe weather season**

Kingman County dodged a bullet on April 26 and 27 when National Weather Service predictions of a major outbreak of strong storms did not materialize in south central Kansas. The system spawned tornadoes that caused damage in southeast Kansas, Oklahoma and points south and east across the rest of the nation.

Fred Simon, Kingman County emergency manager, said this close call should serve as a reminder that preparation and awareness of severe weather are especially important this time of year.

“If the Gulf moisture had pushed up a little farther north and west, it very well could have been us or our close neighbors,” Simon said.

On average, tornado warnings are issued 13 minutes prior to the event, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But warning times vary greatly and may be much less. Thankfully, new technology is broadening the arsenal of awareness for the public.

The American Red Cross has a free tornado warning/tornado alert application for mobile devices. The app includes an audible siren that sounds automatically whenever NOAA issues a tornado warning in the area, even if the app is closed. Call \*\*REDCROSS (\*\*73327677) from your mobile phone to receive a link to download the app, which is available for Android and iOS devices.

Similar apps are available from other vendors such as AccuWeather and NOAA. Many are free but some do charge a fee. Local broadcast media also have weather-related alerts for mobile devices. For more information about these, visit their websites.

When severe weather threatens or is forecast, tune in to a trusted source of information, including a NOAA radio or local media; review where you will go for shelter; call anyone you know who may not be aware of the weather; and charge your mobile devices, including your cellphone, in case power goes out.

Simon said residents should remember that sirens are intended to be outdoor warning devices only; to warn those who are outdoors that severe weather is imminent. Kingman County’s sirens, including one at the Kingman State Lake and one on the county’s side of Cheney State Park, are not intended to take the place of a weather radio or local media reports that can provide ongoing and updated weather information.

“If you are planning an outing at the lake or somewhere else, be sure to check the local forecast for where you plan to be,” he said. “If while you’re there the weather seems to be changing, have some way to check the weather.”

Awareness and preparation are important tools in what sometimes can be a bumpy ride through severe weather season in south central Kansas.

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