# Superintendent’s Memo #043-20


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: February 21, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Save the Date for the 2020 Tornado Drill

The Statewide Tornado Drill, coordinated by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), is a yearly opportunity to prepare Virginians for tornado emergencies and to test public warning systems. Please mark your school calendar to note that Virginia’s annual Statewide Tornado Drill will occur on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, at 9:45 a.m. If widespread severe weather threatens the Commonwealth on that date, the drill will be rescheduled for Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at 9:45 a.m. Participation in the statewide drill will fulfill the requirement of the *Code of Virginia* § 22.1-137.1 for schools to participate in at least one tornado drill each year. Schools may choose an alternate date and time if this date is not convenient.

The drill will start at approximately 9:45 a.m. with a test tornado warning sent in the form of a Required Monthly Test by the National Weather Service to National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radios and local broadcasters.

Since this year's drill will utilize the Required Monthly Test, most NOAA weather radios will NOT automatically sound an alert tone. Those participating in the drill, including schools and businesses, may turn on their NOAA Weather Radio by 9:40 a.m, Those with their NOAA Weather Radio on and listening to the broadcast will hear the audible test alert broadcast at 9:45 a.m. Local radio stations, TV stations, and cable outlets will also broadcast the test message via the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Information and resources are available on the [NOAA Virginia 2020 Severe Weather Preparedness Week](https://www.weather.gov/akq/2020VAswpw) webpage.

For help with planning the drill, school officials may wish to contact their local city, county, or town emergency management office. Emergency management officials can assist school personnel with identifying safe areas in the building and creating an emergency plan. A list of local emergency managers is available at the [Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)](https://lemd.vdem.virginia.gov/Public/Default.aspx) website. Additional information about tornado preparation is available on the [VDEM’s Tornadoes](https://www.vaemergency.gov/threats/tornadoes/) webpage.

For questions about Tornado Preparedness Day or the statewide drill, you may contact Jeff Caldwell, VDEM External Affairs Director, by telephone at (804) 897-6510, or by email at Jeff.Caldwell@vdem.virginia.gov.

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