



**American
Red Cross**
of Greater Chicago

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Deadly Twisters Mark The Start of Tornado Season ***Would your home withstand a tornado?***

CHICAGO –A new type of housing, built to withstand natural disasters, is making its debut in Illinois. Safe Home Illinois will break ground on the Midwest's first inhabited state-of-the-art fortified home in Illinois at 11 a.m. on April 2 at 825 E. Benton Street, Aurora IL. The Greater Chicago Red Cross works to not only respond to disasters but also prevent them. With that goal in mind, the chapter leads disaster mitigation efforts such as Safe Home Illinois to reduce the human suffering that results from disasters.

The state-of-the-art home will be built using techniques designed to increase resistance to nature's destructive forces including tornadoes, earthquakes, flooding and hailstorms. This is done by adding protection to windows and doors, providing better connections between the roof, walls and foundation and installing a thicker, stronger roof that is designed to stay drier and resist hail damage.

Tornado canon demonstrations at the groundbreaking ceremony will illustrate how this special type of construction can withstand natural disasters and gale force winds. Tornado canons operate at an approximate speed of 175 miles per hour.

The home will be built by local high school students, with union supervision. Once completed it will be sold to a low-income family. The family chosen that purchases the home will receive free preparedness training and education from the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago to ensure that they are completely prepared for any emergency.

Peak tornado season in the Midwest is March through April. An estimated 1,500 tornadoes are reported each year in the U.S. and according to the National Weather Service, tornadoes killed 66 Americans in 2006.

Safe Home Illinois is a partnership of the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, the Institute for Business & Home Safety, the Joseph Corporation, DuKane Precast, Allstate and others. For more information on this project visit: www.safehomeillinois.org

The American Red Cross of Greater Chicago offers tips to ensure that your family will be as ready as possible if a tornado strikes:

Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit

The first step in preparing for any type of disaster is to assemble a disaster supplies kit, which should include the following items:

- A first aid kit and any essential medications.
- Special items for infants, the elderly or disabled.

- Canned food and a can opener.
- At least three gallons of water per person.
- Protective clothing, bedding or sleeping bags.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries.
- Written instructions on how to turn off electricity, gas, and water if authorities advise you to do so. (Remember, you'll need a professional to turn natural gas service back on.)

Prepare a Home Tornado Plan

Pick a place where your family can gather if a tornado is headed your way. It can be a basement or a center hallway, bathroom, or closet on the lowest floor. Keep this place uncluttered. If you are in a high-rise building, you may not have enough time to get to the lowest floor, so pick a place in a hallway in the center of the building.

Stay Tuned for Storm Warnings

Listen to your local radio and TV stations for updated storm information and know the difference between a tornado WATCH and a tornado WARNING:

- A tornado **WATCH** means a tornado is possible in your area.
- A tornado **WARNING** means a tornado has been sighted and may be headed for your area. Go to safety immediately.
- Tornado **WATCHES** and **WARNINGS** are issued by county or parish.

When a Tornado WATCH is Issued

- Listen to local radio and TV stations for further updates.
- Pay attention to changing weather conditions. You may see blowing debris or hear the sound of an approaching tornado. Many people say it sounds like a freight train.

When a Tornado WARNING is Issued

- If you are inside, go to the safe place you designated to protect yourself from glass and other flying objects.
- If you are outside, hurry to the basement of a nearby sturdy building, or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area. If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for safety.

After the Tornado Passes

- Watch out for fallen power lines and stay out of damaged areas.
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
- Use a flashlight to inspect your home for damage.
- Do not use candles at any time

The American Red Cross of Greater Chicago serves more than 8.3 million people in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties through the support and generous contributions of individuals, corporations, foundations, and the United Way.

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