

1. What does it mean when I hear the outdoor warning sirens?

In short, it means that something life-threatening is happening and you should go indoors and get more information. The specific guidelines (tornado, hail ,wind, etc.) for sounding sirens varies by jurisdiction, so check with your local community to find out the specifics if you are interested.

2. What should I do when I hear the outdoor warning sirens?

When the sirens are heard, go inside and tune to local media to get more information.

3. Why can't I hear the outdoor warning sirens in my house?

Sirens are an outdoor warning system designed only to alert those who are outside that something dangerous is approaching.

4. How can I get alerts when I'm at work or in my house?

For alerts indoors, every home and business should have a NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards. NOAA Weather Radio is like a smoke detector for severe weather, and it can wake you up when a warning is issued for your area so you can take appropriate action.

5. When are outdoor warning sirens tested?

Sirens are tested according to local community or state policies. In the Quad Cities area, this is on the first Tuesday of each month. Check with your local officials to get the specific day for your community.

6. Why don't the outdoor warning sirens sound an all-clear signal?

People should be indoors and monitoring local media for updates on the storm.

7. Why are the outdoor warning sirens sometimes sounded for hail and wind?

When thunderstorm winds exceed 70 mph, trees can be uprooted or snapped. Hail that is golf ball sized or larger can break windows. Both of these things pose a direct risk to life if people are caught outdoors. An increasing number of communities (including in the Quad Cities area) are incorporating these threats into their outdoor warning siren policies.

8. How often can I expect the outdoor warning sirens to sound for severe weather?

On average, the Quad City area experiences 5 storms each year that meet the common siren guidelines. You can find information about past storms and their frequency in your community through the National Climatic Data Center.

9. Will the outdoor warning sirens warn me of every dangerous storm?

The safest approach is to be proactive and use all of the information available to protect yourself and your family from threatening weather. Nothing can replace common sense. If a storm is approaching, the lightning alone is a threat. Sirens are only one part of a warning system that includes preparation, NOAA Weather Radio, and local media.

10. Who activates the outdoor warning sirens?

Sirens are typically activated by city or county officials, usually a police or fire department or emergency management personnel. Check with your city or county officials to learn more.

11. Does the National Weather Service recommend guidelines for sounding outdoor warning sirens?

Nationally, no. However, the local NWS office in the Quad Cities partnered with local emergency

managers to develop the recommended siren guidelines that have since been adopted by many local communities.

12. Why does the Quad City area have a common guideline for sounding outdoor warning sirens?

When life-threatening weather is approaching, minutes or even seconds could make a difference. If people are unsure or confused about an alert, they may not respond quickly or appropriately. By adopting common outdoor warning system guidelines, confusion will be eliminated, response time will be reduced, and lives will be saved. Throughout the Quad City metro area, communities have adopted a common protocol for sounding their outdoor warning systems (sirens). Find out more on our [Quad Cities Siren Guideline Page](#).

13. Where can I get more information?

Check out these resources:

- [Warning Systems](#)
- [Watches and Warnings](#)
- [NOAA Weather Radio](#)