



## **CITIZENS ENCOURAGED TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS BEFORE SEVERE WEATHER STRIKES**

*Governor Declares March 29 – April 4 Severe Weather Awareness Week*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 31, 2009**

**LANSING.** Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has declared the week of March 29 as Severe Weather Awareness Week encouraging citizens to take precautions to protect themselves and their homes before an emergency strikes. Severe weather can occur at any time, as evidenced by current flooding conditions and recent tornadoes threatening residents throughout the Midwest.

Spring and summer frequently include fast-changing weather conditions increasing the potential for severe weather such as thunderstorms, tornadoes and flash flooding. Simple steps can be taken to ensure safety before an incident occurs such as understanding severe weather warnings and terms, preparing an emergency kit, creating an emergency plan, knowing evacuation routes and creating an emergency contact list.

In 2008, Michigan residents experienced a significant amount of severe weather events including 14 tornadoes, 21 flash flood warnings, and 137 flood warnings causing more than \$300 million in damage statewide. Severe flooding and thunderstorm winds were also responsible for the death of six Michigan citizens. In June 2008, a combination of thunderstorms, heavy rain, tornadoes and flooding caused more than \$100 million in damage. Twelve counties were declared a federal disaster due to severely damaged public facilities and infrastructure.

“Last year’s severe weather events are a somber reminder of the potential dangers facing Michigan residents,” said Capt. W. Thomas Sands, commander of the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (MSP/EMHSD). “To remain safe during all-hazards, it is important for citizens to develop, practice and update their emergency plans routinely.”

**MORE**

To help kick-off Severe Weather Awareness Week, the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest winners were recognized today at the Capitol for their efforts in promoting the importance of being prepared and staying alert before an emergency. Nearly 700 posters were submitted this year from fourth and fifth graders statewide.

Poster Contest Winners:

- First Place: Melanie Smalley, fifth grade, Brownstown, Mich.
- Second Place: Katie Webster, fifth grade, Rochester Hills, Mich.
- Third Place: Reagan Mihailoff, fourth grade, Flint, Mich.
- Honorable Mention: Jacob Mitchell, fifth grade, Charlevoix, Mich.

The annual poster contest is sponsored by the Michigan Severe Weather Awareness Committee, comprised of the Insurance Institute of Michigan, National Weather Service, State Farm Insurance, MSP/EMHSD, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, WDIV-TV Detroit, Michigan Earth Science Teachers Association, Michigan Emergency Management Association, American Red Cross and the Michigan Sheriff's Association.

For additional information on how to prepare for severe weather and to view the winning posters, visit [www.michigan.gov/emhsd](http://www.michigan.gov/emhsd).

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*The Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division is responsible for coordinating state and federal resources to assist local government in response and relief activities in the event of an emergency or disaster, as well as coordinating homeland security initiatives and various federal grants.*

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

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