

Severe Weather Response



What is a “Severe Weather Response”?

Severe weather can strike Atlanta at any time of year. As witnessed in Sanford, NC, April 2011, when a tornado struck a Lowe’s store, quick thinking staff were the difference between survival and a tragic outcome.

This document highlights specific responsibilities of staff members who are present in the CRC when severe weather threatens.



GTPD

From a GT land line: Call “911”
From a cell phone: Call (404) 894-2500

INITIAL PRIORITIES WHEN SEVERE WEATHER IS THREATENING:

At the first sign of a potential weather threat, the building supervisor uses radio and directs Member Services to conduct PA announcements to ensure that staff and patrons are (1) aware of the situation and (2) know what to do in case a tornado watch is upgraded to a tornado warning. Frequent and repeated updates via the PA system are an important component of the response. Keep people informed as the situation unfolds.

DECIDING WHEN TO INITIATE A SEVERE WEATHER RESPONSE:

Deciding exactly when to move patrons to the severe weather zones is a difficult call. However, after consultation with the Department of Georgia Tech Emergency Preparedness, there are resources to assist with the decision to initiate a response. Being overly cautious in uncertain situations can be an effective response. It can prevent injuries and save lives. The CRC Building Supervisor will more times than not be charged with deciding when to initiate the severe weather response for the CRC, utilizing the information that is available. Doing so requires knowledge of the building, the surrounding geography, general weather patterns, and up-to-date info about current conditions.

Can the Building Supervisor initiate a severe weather response without permission of a higher authority? If conditions warrant doing so, **absolutely!** However, we believe by following the below-listed procedures and utilizing the resources available, most of the ambiguity can be mitigated.

1. GT Emergency Notification System (GTENS)

Building Supervisors (and all supervisory-level positions) are required to sign up for GTENS. This will be the primary indicator used to initiate a weather response. You can sign-up for GTENS at the following site: <http://www.gatech.edu/emergency/notification.html> Once registered, recipients will receive a phone call, email, and text message notifying the receiver of the specific alert, and recommended actions. Other features of GTENS includes campus sirens, digital signs, computer clusters, and academic classrooms. If a GTENS alert is received that states "Ga Tech is under a tornado warning", Building Supervisors are to immediately move all patrons and staff to the shelter areas.

2. Wireless Emergency Alert

This can be used as a supportive option.

Most smart phones are now equipped to alert the owner of a particular emergency (i.e. weather, Amber Alerts). In addition, this alert is geographic specific, as it corresponds to the cell tower of where the phone is currently located. This alert will more than likely accompany a GTENS alert if you're on campus.

3. Weather Box/National Weather Service

This can be used as a secondary support option.

Main Issue 1 has a Weather Box, which will pull information from the National Weather Service. This is a county-based system and will provide all severe weather situations in the Atlanta-metro area (severe thunderstorm, tornado watch, tornado warning, flash floods). It is important for the Main Issue Attendant to be prepared to communicate the details to the Building Supervisor.

BUILDING SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

When weather conditions are of concern, the CRC Building Supervisor is responsible for:

- Instructing Main Issue 1 and/or someone at Access Control to monitor conditions at www.weather.com or www.noaa.gov and “@GTPDalerts” on Twitter;
- Directing Member Services to inform patrons and staff via repeated PA announcements of official watches and warnings – being sure that they instruct patrons to be prepared to move to the nearest shelter area should conditions deteriorate; and if instructed to implement CRC’s the severe weather response;
- Working through Access Control (AC) to direct CRC staff to emergency radio channel 10, to confirm all departments have switched; and to initiate movement of staff and patrons to weather safety zones in the CRC in the event of a clear and present weather emergency.

Note that because a tornado warning has been declared for Fulton or a surrounding county does not mean the CRC or our patrons are in imminent danger. Georgia Tech’s Department of Emergency Preparedness monitors severe weather situations and will provide timely announcements.

SEVERE WEATHER PROTOCOLS:

Thunderstorm Watch & Warning:

1. MI1 monitors situation at www.weather.com or www.noaa.gov and informs BS.
2. BS uses personal phone and/or iPad to follow “@GTPDalerts” on Twitter for updates
3. BS may choose to inform CRC staff by radio.
 - a. *If a severe T-storm warning is announced for the area (via weather radios or website), this is not an automatic cause for initiating the severe weather response. It is cause for assessing the situation carefully and informing patrons of the situation and what to do if conditions worsen.*
4. Assess where the storm is located and what direction is it heading?
5. Member services makes the following announcement and continues to repeat it every 10 minutes until the watch expires:

"Attention CRC patrons: Fulton County is under a severe thunderstorm watch. This means conditions are favorable for a severe thunderstorm including hail, lightening, and high winds to develop in our area. There is no need to discontinue your workout, but please do take a moment to locate the nearest weather safety zone in case the situation should deteriorate. CRC staff will monitor the situation. If Georgia Tech assesses imminent danger, you will be directed to seek immediate shelter."

Tornado Watch:

1. MI1 monitors situation at www.weather.com or www.noaa.gov and informs BS.
 2. BS uses personal phone and/or iPad to follow “@GTPDalerts” on Twitter for updates
 3. BS informs staff by radio; reminds them to locate the nearest weather safety zone.
 4. BS directs Member Services to make an announcement to patrons and to repeat the message every 10 minutes until the watch expires.
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"Attention CRC patrons: Fulton County is under a tornado watch. This means conditions are favorable for a tornado to develop. There is no need to discontinue your workout, but please do take a moment to locate the nearest weather safety zone in case the situation should deteriorate. CRC staff will monitor the situation. If Georgia Tech assesses an imminent danger, you will be directed to seek immediate shelter."

Tornado Warning: Fulton County but no GTENS Alert

1. MI1 monitors situation at www.weather.com or www.noaa.gov and informs BS.
2. BS uses personal phone and/or iPad to follow "@GTPDalerts" on Twitter for updates
3. BS informs staff via radio that Fulton County is under a warning, but Georgia Tech's Office of Emergency Preparedness has identified no imminent threat to the campus.
4. Member Services continues to update patrons on the situation via the PA every 10 minutes.

Tornado Warning: Fulton County with GTENS Alert

1. If a GTENS Alert is received, it will state "Ga Tech is under a tornado warning. Seek shelter..."
2. Building supervisor contacts (1) Member Services and (2) Access Control and instructs them to initiate the emergency weather response.
3. Member Services makes the following announcement (3 x's) then proceeds to the 2nd floor corridor weather safety zone, closing the hallway doors:

"Georgia Tech's Office of Emergency Preparedness has declared that Georgia Tech is under a tornado warning. Please stop your workout and proceed immediately to the nearest weather safety zone located inside the CRC. Staff please move to radio channel 10."

4. Access Control conducts radio checks to ensure all departments have switched to channel 10 and are moving to their designated safe areas.
5. BS uses personal phone/iPad to follow "@GTPDalerts" on Twitter for updates

Nearest Safe Zones

Member Services: Main hallway beyond H20 café & stairwells S7 & S8.

- Sweep stairwells post event.

Access Control: 2nd floor Hallway, near room 251.

- Sweep stairwells "S5 & S6" post event.

G.I.T. FIT area: Lower level locker rooms off the fitness floors.

- Sweep S15 & S16 post event.

Climbing Wall: Lower level locker rooms off of the fitness floor.

Wilderness Outpost: Staff moves to ORGT classroom for tornado

- Sweep ORGT stairwell post event.

4th Floor (MI4, Intramurals, GIT FIT): Down stairwells #7 and #8 (best) or ANY other stairwells, into the aquatics area hallway, overflow to locker rooms.
If you move to stairwells, move to the lowest possible level.

Aquatics: One staff outside Crawford pool to prop open the hallway to “S7 & S8” stairwell doors.

- Clear pool deck into hallway or locker rooms (including Varsity Locker rooms) & Classroom #147.
- Spectator seating to move to stairwells, #7 or #8, hallway, or locker rooms.

Additional Areas for consideration

Roe Stamps Fields/Alumni Park: Parking deck or stairwell and up against wall. If staff know (NOT think) that it is safe, they can suggest entering the front door of the CRC

Challenge Course: If time allows, move out of the area, into a building, and move to its severe weather locations. If unable, move into storage or restrooms with door shut.

Couch Park: If time allows, move out of the area, into a building, and move to its severe weather locations. If unable, find the lowest ground but away from tall trees.

CONTINUOUS UPDATES AND SOUNDING THE “ALL CLEAR”:

Once a GTENS has been triggered, and after CRC staff has responded, The Office of Emergency Preparedness expects all personnel to follow “@GTPDalerts” on Twitter. This will provide the most up-to-date information and announce the “All Clear” when the campus is once again safe to resume normal activities.

Once the “All Clear” is confirmed, the Building Supervisor shall direct Member Services to announce over the PA System that patrons may leave the sheltered area. All areas are to remain on Channel 10 until they have swept their area and confirmed it to be clear.

Post evacuation: all areas are to be swept and employees are to report “area clear” to Access Control. Access Control reports to the Building Supervisor that all areas have been confirmed cleared.

THORGUARD – LIGHTENING PROTOCOLS:

For all outdoor activities, the CRC is equipped with ThorGuard, an advanced warning system for lightening. If a threat is confirmed by the system, a loud horn will sound for ten seconds. The system also has a yellow circular light to signify there is a threat. This is helpful for those who may have not heard the horn and/or during the evening hours. Once the horn is heard, all programmed activity must cease. This includes, but is not limited to the following CRC-programmed areas: Alumni Park, Roe E. Stamps Fields, Couch Park, and the Challenge Course. All participants must seek shelter inside a building or car. Do NOT stay outdoors if ThorGuard has gone off.

Once the threat has passed, the system will emit three, five-second blasts of the horn. The circular light will turn off. This signifies the “All Clear”. Only after this point are programmed activities able to resume.

