



# Village of Mahomet ESDA

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is Mahomet Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA)?**

The purpose of ESDA is to mitigate potential hazards, plan for, coordinate, respond to and aid in recovery from all disaster situations whether natural or man-made. Mahomet ESDA is a completely volunteer organization under the Village of Mahomet Police Department.

There are currently seven active ESDA volunteers, with several others inactive that will respond if needed.

### **When does Mahomet ESDA activate for storm spotting?**

Activation happens when the National Weather Service issues a watch or warning pertinent to the general location of the Village of Mahomet. However, ESDA volunteers monitor the weather situation even prior to warnings being issued if there is the possibility of severe weather approaching the Village.

If activation is warranted by the National Weather Service or at the discretion of the Director or two Deputy Directors, trained spotters will be notified to report to the EOC as soon as they can do so safely. In most cases spotters are alerted well in advance of a severe weather threat possibility. Spotters will be deployed during daylight hours per IEMA protocol. Per this protocol they will not be deployed after dark for a tornado warning.

### **What is an Outdoor Warning Siren System?**

An Emergency Outdoor Warning Siren System is an all-hazards siren system used to warn the general population of potential danger. During an emergency, the sirens may be activated for a set amount of time as determined by the Village of Mahomet. Sirens are an outdoor warning system designed only to alert those who are outside that something dangerous is approaching and not designed to be heard by people indoors.

### **What should I do if I hear the sirens?**

If the sirens are activated - and it is not a monthly siren test - the public should see it as a signal to seek shelter; tune in to radio, television, or technology devices to get information about type of

emergency and instructions and recommendations; and listen to your local media for indications that the emergency is over.

### **What are the criteria for sounding outdoor warning sirens for severe weather in the Village of Mahomet?**

The outdoor warning sirens are sounded when a trained storm spotter or Mahomet Police Officer confirms a funnel cloud aloft, tornado on the ground, cloud rotation aloft or winds in excess of 70 MPH and is an eminent threat to the Village of Mahomet. The sighting of cold air funnels does NOT fall under these criteria.

National Weather Service radar will sometimes indicate rotation in a warned area that may or may not lead to the formation of a tornado. If radar indicates a possible threat to the Village *after dark* the sirens WILL be sounded.

### **I cannot hear the sirens inside my home, does that mean they are not working correctly?**

Remember, these are outdoor warning sirens, and have a range so it depends on your location and can also be affected by things like wind which may dampen the sound. You may be able to hear them inside if you live close to a location, but those who live on the outer edge of the range will likely never hear them inside.

### **Are outdoor warning sirens the best method for warning residents about a tornado threat or other disasters?**

With technology constantly changing, there are other methods available. Some communities have actually discontinued the use of an outdoor warning siren. For alerts indoors, every home and business should have a NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards. Your cell phone can also help keep you safe in severe weather. We highly recommend residents sign up for Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) which contain potentially life-saving information. WEAs are sent by authorized government alerting authorities such as the NWS, FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security and local and state public safety agencies. They are distributed to all phones within a certain radius of the emergency, so you will receive them for whatever local area you are in. Your mobile device must be enabled to receive them. On an iPhone, tap "Settings" and then "Notifications." Scroll to "Government Alerts" at the bottom of the screen. Check that "Emergency Alerts" and "Public Safety Alerts" are turned on. The green circle indicates the alerts are on and enabled. On Android devices in "Settings," find "Apps and Notifications." Tap "Notifications." Next, turn on "Allow alerts." Make sure each of the alert types are enabled. While enabled, a loud tone will alert you whenever you receive WEA.

### **When would the sirens not be sounded during a radar indicated tornado threat?**

If trained storm spotters confirm there is no eminent threat to the Village during *daylight hours*, the sirens will NOT be sounded.

## **I received a tornado warning message on my phone, why did the sirens not sound in Mahomet?**

There was not an eminent threat to the Village. You may receive a WEA message on your phone when there is a tornado warning in our area of Champaign County. If Mahomet is not in the direct path of the confirmed or radar indicated tornado, the sirens likely will not sound.

## **Do the outdoor warning sirens sound automatically during a tornado warning?**

No. The sirens are sounded when ESDA personnel activate the sirens.

## **Is there an “all-clear” siren sounded after a storm has passed the Village?**

No. There is NOT an all-clear siren after the threat has passed the Village. Continue to be weather aware.

## **Are there any other reasons for the sirens to be sounded?**

The sirens are tested once per month on the first Tuesday at 10:00 a.m. UNLESS there is inclement weather in the area. The sirens may also be sounded due to environmental and man-made disasters such as chemical spills, significant earthquakes, etc.

## **How can I become an ESDA volunteer?**

Mahomet ESDA is always looking for volunteers. The general requirements are you must be 18 years of age, have a valid driver's license, a Mahomet address and pass a background check. You do not need to be a Village resident. You will need to attend and pass a free storm spotter class within one year of joining.

**For more information regarding outdoor warning sirens, please click the link below from Champaign County EMA: <http://www.champaigncountyema.org/index.php/outdoor-sirens>**