



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **From Sirens to Sandbags, REMA Is Prepared for It All**

When a tornado strikes in the middle of the night, have you ever thought about who sets the sirens off? It's the volunteers at the Romeoville Emergency Management Agency (REMA). They activate and maintain all 20 plus warning sirens throughout the village. REMA decides when to turn them on through scientific meteorology and will only activate them for a direct threat for Romeoville. "When we set the sirens off, we want our residents to know it's time to get in the basement or take cover in an interior room," says REMA Coordinator Mike Littrell. When the sirens go off, you should take cover for *at least* 15 minutes. If they sound again, that clock resets and you need to shelter in place for another 15 minutes. "We will continue to set off the sirens until the danger has passed," explains Littrell. "If we need to set them off four times, we'll do it four times." It's also important to know that when the sirens go off, the storm will be arriving soon. "We'll usually wait until ten minutes before that storm gets here. Turn them on too early and people get out of their shelters just as the storm hits. We want people in a safe area when the storm arrives," says Littrell. "We'll do it right before the winds get heavy, because you can't hear a siren in 50 mph winds." This once again underlines the importance of having an all-hazards weather radio in your home or office. No matter how heavy the winds, you should always be able to hear your weather radio.



REMA protects the community in other ways too. For example, they encourage all residents to have a plan. If a tornado came through right now, what would you need? Maybe some cash, a change of clothes, emergency food, water and medications. Throw these in a bag and put them where you would hide from a storm. You should have enough supplies for 72 hours. Don't wait until something happens before you start gathering things.

What about an evacuation? If you were told you had to leave your house in a hurry, what would you need? Think about medications and pet care. What if you couldn't get back into your house for 10 hours? Be prepared for that.

REMA is the Swiss army knife of Romeoville; they are multi-faceted. "We're prepared for the unexpected and are very self-sufficient," says Littrell. A lot of the equipment REMA has, they built themselves. The cars were rebuilt, outfitted, and painted by the volunteers. The building itself was designed by Littrell and wired and maintained by the volunteers. And as far as being prepared, REMA has a shelter trailer with enough supplies for 170 people, from food and water to bedding and toothpaste. They've got flood kits and 4,000 sand bags. They have bleach kits to clean flooded houses and coolers if people lose power. They have four-wheel drive SUVs with winches, which were put to good use in the last blizzard. Back then, before the police had their own SUVs, REMA drove the officers through the snow to their calls.

Right now there are 25 people at REMA, with 24 of them being volunteers. "What we do is important, but our motto is work and family come first," says Littrell. Still, REMA is not for everyone. You need to be willing to be on call 24 hours a day. You must live within a 10 mile radius of Village Hall, be able to pass a background check, and a host of other things. If you think you have what it takes to be a volunteer, call them at 815-886-4085 and start the process.

It is comforting to know that Romeoville has such a well-trained, equipped, and dedicated group of people keeping an eye on the well-being of the community.

*This article is part three of a three-part series highlighting the Romeoville Emergency Management Agency.*