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Kansas Division of Emergency Management advises public to be prepared for tornado season

As we head into the spring months, the risk of severe thunderstorms increases across Kansas, including the risk for tornadoes. Unfortunately, with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, people who rely on public sheltering from tornadoes could be faced with the difficult choice of sheltering from the tornado in a community shelter or refraining from going to the shelter in order to limit potential exposure to COVID-19.

At this time, the Kansas Division of Emergency Management recommends that your first priority should be to protect yourself from a potential tornado. However, the decision to open a community shelter will ultimately be at the discretion of local officials. Before you decide to go to a community shelter, first check with local officials to ensure they will be open. This should be done ahead of any thunderstorm, well before any warnings are issued. If you rely on community shelters, now is a good time to explore other options that will help keep you safe from a tornado while also limiting your potential exposure to COVID-19.

"We should not let fear of the coronavirus blind us to the danger of an imminent tornado," Governor Laura Kelly said. "If you have to seek refuge in a community shelter, try to practice social distancing and other precautions as much as possible to minimize your risk."

"The onset of tornado season is also a good time to take stock of your family's emergency supplies and review your emergency plan," Maj. Gen. Lee Tafanelli, the adjutant general and director of the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, said. "Above all, don't let the threat of potential virus exposure outweigh the real threat of an approaching tornado."

For current information on COVID-19 in Kansas, and to sign up for updates, go to the KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center at kdhe.ks.gov/coronavirus.