

WHITFIELD EARNS STORMREADY RE-RECOGNITION FROM NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

By **MITCH TALLEY**

Whitfield County Director of Communications

Whitfield County Emergency Management Director Claude Craig has long said, be prepared for the worst and hope for the best.

That philosophy has earned the local agency statewide re-recognition as one of the 2,706 StormReady and/or TsunamiReady sites in 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Pacific Islands.

“Being StormReady means that we have taken the time to make sure we have done everything that we can do so that a comprehensive plan is in place and we are prepared when Mother Nature brings severe weather to our area,” Craig said. “It also illustrates the importance of establishing a close working relationship between our local National Weather Service offices, emergency management partners, and ultimately the communities that we serve.”

The announcement of the StormReady designation came in a Feb. 2 letter from David J. Nadler, warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service, Peachtree City.

“On behalf of the Georgia StormReady Advisory Board, I would like to congratulate you, and your team, on your jurisdiction’s StormReady re-recognition,” Nadler said. “It is clearly the result of your vision, leadership, hard work, and commitment to the citizens of Whitfield County. They should take great pride and comfort in maintaining this status, and, to a great degree, they have you to thank for it.”

The StormReady re-recognition for Whitfield County will be valid for three years, expiring on Feb. 25, 2021.

StormReady is a National Weather Service program designed to recognize counties that have reached a high level of severe weather preparedness. To be recognized as StormReady, a county must meet criteria established jointly between the NWS and state and local emergency management officials. These criteria include:

- Having a local 24-hour warning point and an Emergency Operations Center.
- Having multiple ways of receiving NWS warnings.
- Being able to monitor local weather/river conditions.
- Having multiple ways of alerting the public.
- Promoting public readiness through community seminars and presentations.
- Having a formal hazardous weather plan.
- Having trained spotters.
- Conducting periodic drills / exercises.
- Interacting with their supporting NWS office.

The essence of the program is to ensure the entire warning system performs properly when severe weather strikes. The "system" is comprised of the NWS (which issues the warnings), local emergency management (which ensures the warnings get communicated), and you (who respond properly to the warnings). When each part of this system performs well, lives and property are saved. StormReady recognizes those counties in which the system is most likely to perform well.

The recognition comes as Whitfield EMA is holding its annual observance of Severe Weather Preparedness Week Feb. 5-9, with a focus on educating the public about thunderstorm, tornado, lightning, and flood safety. Whitfield EMA gave away 100 NOAA weather radios to local residents Monday during an event at the Dalton Public Library.

“Severe weather can be unpredictable and extremely dangerous,” Craig said. “By taking steps to prepare before it strikes, you can ensure that you and your family stay safe. I encourage our residents to implement safety measures at home and at work so they will be ready when severe weather strikes.”