

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Press Conference
February 15, 2002*

Good morning. On Thanksgiving weekend this past November, Mississippians across the state were gathered for food, families and football.

At the same time, storm clouds gathered over our state, unleashing their force and destruction on people and property.

I visited the communities hit hard by the tornadoes that came with those storms. I talked with the people whose homes were completely flattened by the fury of the storms.

The energy that comes from the storms and severe weather in our state can be difficult to describe, but the statistics speak for themselves.

Last year, 59 tornadoes hit our state, more than double the average number. Of those 59 tornadoes, 2 of them were F-4 tornadoes – the most violent of all. Thirteen Mississippians died in those tornadoes and more than 200 were injured.

The impact of severe weather on our state cannot be overstated, and our best defense against such weather is found in preparation.

As a result, I am proclaiming the week of February 18 as “Severe Weather Awareness” week in Mississippi.

Throughout the week, the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, the National Weather Service and local county emergency management agencies will be working to educate the public on this tremendously important issue.

I’d like to ask Robert Latham, Executive Director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, to speak to the work MEMA does and the message for next week. Robert?