Joplin Schools

# Statement


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Joplin Schools
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Last night, Joplin Schools administrators, along with much of the Four-States area, were keeping careful watch on the development of possible severe weather conditions. We would like to provide our community and families with insight into how the evening unfolded regarding our district's Community Safe Rooms.

Near 9:00 pm when Jasper County was placed under a tornado watch, a reminder about Safe Room locations and rules was shared on the District's Facebook page and in ParentSquare, the district's mass communication tool for parents and staff. The message reiterated that District Safe Rooms will be opened when prompted by a Tornado Warning from the National Weather Service or if the City of Joplin triggers tornado sirens.

All Safe Room doors across the district remained closed until about 11:16pm, when a Tornado Warning was issued in northern Jasper County, crossing the Kansas/Missouri state line northwest of Carl Junction. Because the 11:16 pm warning existed in Jasper County, Safe Room doors district-wide were automatically opened, except for Joplin High School, which seems to have experienced a malfunction. However, a district Safe Room supervisor arrived at JHS at 11:22 pm and manually unlocked the door. That automated malfunction is being investigated to ensure proper functioning in the future.

At about 11:35 p.m., a second tornado warning was issued near northeast Joplin, heading toward Carthage. By that time, all Joplin Schools Safe Rooms were already open.

Although many district staff and administrators spend a great deal of time and focus to be weather-aware, the district does not employ a meteorologist; therefore, we rely heavily on National Weather Service communications, local emergency management officials, and local meteorologists to inform our process. While it is our practice to rely on automated Safe Room openings when a tornado warning is published, we do have the ability to open doors ahead of a warning if local emergency management officials or local meteorology reports indicate the need.

If Safe Rooms are opened ahead of a tornado warning or activation of storm sirens, that information will be announced on the district's Facebook page.

As a reminder, Community Safe Rooms were added to many Joplin Schools buildings thanks to a grant after the May 22, 2011 tornado. The Safe Rooms are owned and operated by Joplin Schools and have no affiliation with the City of Joplin. While every district school building has a Safe Room for the use of students and staff, not all buildings can offer a Community Safe Room due to construction and accessibility differences. Please refer to our website's complete list of Community Safe Room locations at www.JoplinSchools.org/district/community_safe_rooms.

We will continue to review our practices and policies to ensure our Community Safe Rooms are in proper working order and available as a refuge when needed. We are grateful to be able to share our Community Safe Rooms with our neighbors and grateful for the district volunteers who work to prepare and supervise these spaces in emergency conditions. We are also grateful for close partnerships with Joplin's emergency management personnel and local meteorology experts who work to inform our community about unpredictable severe weather changes at a moment's notice.