

City of Dickson offering free weather radios for residents

As part of its continuing effort to provide for the safety of its residents, the City of Dickson will begin providing free weather radios.

Mayor Don L. Weiss Jr. announced at the April 1 Dickson County Chamber breakfast that the Seconds Matter! campaign begun nine years ago is being expanded to provide one free weather radio to any household inside the city limits.

“The Midland Weather and Emergency Alert radio will come programmed for National Weather Service alerts affecting Dickson,” Weiss said. “It includes batteries for backup in a power outage and features a time and alarm clock, weather forecasts at the push of a button and adjustable alert volume.”

Just days after the Mayor’s announcement, the City of Dickson was hit by what the National Weather Service classified as an EF-0 tornado on April 5 that damaged roofs and downed trees but did not cause any injuries.

Starting Oct. 1, the first order of weather radios will be available at the administrative office of Dickson Fire Department Station #1, 101 Church St. Anyone interested in obtaining one of the free radios can do so 7:00 am-3:00 pm Monday-Friday. Radios may not be picked up on weekends or holidays. Residents are limited to one radio per household and must provide proof of an address inside the city limits of Dickson.

“Once the initial order is distributed, we’ll order more and start a waiting list to notify residents when the radios are available,” said City Administrator David Travis. “We’ll keep going until every eligible household that wants one has a radio and then keep some in stock for new residents.”

Mayor Weiss and city officials presented the first radio Oct. 1 to Rosalind Sowell, who recently retired as the city’s director of the Emergency Communications Department.

Mayor Weiss and the Dickson City Council launched the Seconds Matter! campaign in 2016 by providing free address markers to any residence in the city and thousands of markers have been installed by emergency personnel.

“By providing a standardized marker that is strategically placed at each home, we hope to make it easier and quicker for ambulances, police officers and firefighters to find the location where help is needed,” Mayor Weiss said at the chamber event. “Not every home has its numbers on a mailbox and those mailboxes are sometimes across the street or grouped together, making it a little more difficult to quickly pinpoint a location.”

Mayor Weiss said emergency personnel know where to look for the markers and don’t have to scan mailboxes or homes for a number.

“And, as the program’s name indicates, seconds do matter when it comes to responding to an emergency and can be the difference between life and death,” Mayor Weiss said. “These free address markers are still available to everyone who lives in the City of Dickson. You can go to the city’s website at cityofdickson.com to complete and submit a request form at the Seconds Matter! link on the homepage.”

In recent years, the city expanded the Seconds Matter! campaign to include free smoke detectors installed by the Dickson Fire Department, free trigger locks provided by the Dickson Police Department, free child safety seat checks by certified personnel at both departments and now will be distributing free weather radios.

To request a smoke detector, contact the Dickson Fire Department at 615-446-6331 or stop by Station #1 at 101 Church St. during weekday business hours.

To obtain a free trigger lock, contact the Dickson Police Department at 615-446-5403 or stop by 202 South Main St. during weekday business hours.

Certified personnel from the police and fire departments can check the installation of a child safety seat during weekday business hours and frequently conduct safety seat checkpoints at community events such as the Dickson County Fair and Old Timers Day.

“As we experienced severe weather, we once again saw on social media questions about tornado sirens,” Mayor Weiss said to a record crowd of more than 175 people at the chamber breakfast. “Middle Tennessee experiences most of its tornadoes March through May.”

City personnel looked into proposals for sirens and even the companies that sell and install the alarm systems said their effectiveness is limited based on how close you are to the siren. They are mainly designed to alert people who are outside in the vicinity of a siren and would have limited effectiveness inside a home, business or industry. A company representative told the City Council it is unlikely a siren will wake people up at night unless they are right next to it.

The proposals reviewed by the city ranged from three to nine sirens with a price range of \$120,000 to \$300,000 just for installation, and did not include the cost of obtaining or leasing property for the sirens. There would be ongoing maintenance costs to include solar or battery backup systems in the event of a power outage.

“Other communities with emergency sirens that we contacted told us they are moving away from them to other emergency notification systems,” Mayor Weiss said.

A 2015 study performed by the Iowa Emergency Management Association following tornado outbreaks in Missouri, Oklahoma and Alabama determined that overuse of siren systems including frequent testing leads people to ignore them and mistrust their accuracy. The study found that many people who heard the sirens did not immediately seek shelter but instead began calling friends or going online to attempt to verify the existence of a threat before taking action.

“We decided an emergency alert system would be much more effective,” Mayor Weiss said.

In January, the City of Dickson launched the CodeRED emergency alert system. This service is provided free to residents of Dickson who can sign up for messages regarding emergency and public service notifications. When you register, you choose what kind of messages you want and how you want to receive them.

Choices include:

- Severe weather notifications;
- Police Department notifications;
- Fire Department notifications;
- Public Works Department notifications;
- Parks and Recreation Department and Events notifications; and
- General city notifications.

With CodeRED, you can be alerted by text, email, voice call or even TTY message for the hearing impaired. If you don’t answer the initial call, a message will be left with the alert or directing you to call for information. If it’s a number with no voicemail or answering machine or the line is busy, the system will continue to call the number. CodeRED messages also are available in Spanish.

“Not only can you get messages about severe weather, but notifications can include road closures due to wrecks, construction or events such as parades, missing persons, changes in the trash or leaf pickup schedule, special events in the city or parks system, seasonal park activities and much more,” Mayor Weiss said. “You get to choose what kind of messages you want to receive.”

To sign up, text “Dickson” to 24639 to set up a free CodeRED account and make your choices for what kind of messages you want and how you want to receive them. You also can go online to <https://accountportal.onsolve.net/dicksonn>.

The CodeRED service specifically targets residences and businesses in the City of Dickson and is in addition to the Nixle alert system already provided through the Dickson County Emergency Communications District. By going to [Nixle.com](https://www.nixle.com), you can register to receive free text messages or emails about weather and other emergencies from the 911 dispatch center based on your zip code.

“Safety will always be a priority of the City of Dickson and we are constantly looking at ways to improve the services we offer,” Mayor Weiss said. “Between the CodeRED alert system and the free weather radios, along with area news media and other information sources, we want to provide our residents with every possible opportunity to be forewarned about severe weather and other emergencies.”