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While this week's weather may be quite mild in the High Country, today marks the beginning of Severe Weather Awareness week in North Carolina. As hurricane and storm season loom on the horizon, and news of tornados flash through the country, Governor Mike Easley is urging citizens to be prepared with safety plans for their home, office and school. Easley announces that schools and government buildings statewide will hold tornado drills this Wednesday. Watauga County Emergency Management Technician Seth Norris says that while the high country may not be at high risk for tornadoes, they have hit the area in recent history. Easley reminds citizens to stay tuned to local broadcast media when severe weather is likely. If a tornado watch is issued, that means conditions are favorable and a tornado is possible. If a warning is issued, it means that a tornado has actually been spotted on radar and people should go to safe shelter immediately. The Dept. of Crime Control and Public Safety say the safest place during a tornado is underground in a basement or storm cellar. If none are available, go to the lowest floor of the house, and to an interior room such as a hallway or closet. Those in mobile homes are especially vulnerable and are advised to go to a prearranged shelter. Schoolchildren should go to inner hallways, but stay out of gymnasiums, auditoriums or cafeterias – all areas with a large roof-span. Office workers should take shelter under something sturdy like a desk or table to protect from flying debris or a collapsed roof. Everyone should stay away from windows. Drivers should get out of their cars and take shelter in a low-lying area such as a ditch. Don't forget to review your family's disaster plan with all members of the family and arrange for a meeting place when the crisis has passed.