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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration official Jeff Hutton makes a severe weather presentation to around 40 local weather watchers on Tuesday at the Activity Center.

L&T photo/Chris Linenbroker

By CHRIS LINENBROKER • Leader & Times The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, hosted its annual 2013 Severe Weather and Spotter Presentation on Tuesday at the Liberal activity center. There was a good turnout of citizens, law enforcement and fire personnel. Jeff Hutton provided a presentation on types of weather that may occur in the local region.

In 2012, Kansas had 94 confirmed tornadoes with only one fatality. Thirty-four of those tornadoes were in the local region. Last year's tornado season started in mid-April, and the last one was on June 14.

Hutton wanted people to know tornadoes can happen at any time of the year, so just because it's not officially tornado season doesn't mean there's not a chance of one occurring.

Severe weather doesn't always mean tornadoes. Lightning is the most common cause of death in the U.S. by storms, but large hail and high winds cause the most damage. Every storm is unique, so when severe weather approaches, people need to take precautions.

Many people will hear thunder or the sirens going off and the first thing they do is go outside and see if they can spot this act of nature. What people should be doing is staying inside and listen to the radio or TV to find out what is going on. Taking shelter early is better than late.

Seward County Director of Emergency Management Greg Standard said Liberal will be getting new sirens in April. These will be an upgrade to what are now situated in some areas. He also wanted people to know these sirens are outside warning devices, and some people have told him that they can't hear the sirens inside their houses.

Standard said a NOAA weather radio can be a way for people to have their own indoor alert. These radios can be set to alarm mode, and this will give people a way to keep informed with severe weather.

People should take severe weather seriously, not postponing that baseball game is not worth getting someone hurt.

For more information on weather, go to weather.gov/ddc.

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