



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Recovering from Severe Storms and Tornado

DAVID J. VALESKY August 13, 2014

My deepest condolences to the families of Kimberly Hilliard, Paris Newman, Virginia Warner, and Arnie Allen, who died in the tornado that hit Smithfield on July 8.

As the area recovers from the devastating storms and tornado, Disaster Action Teams from the [American Red Cross of Central New York](#) are offering assistance to those whose homes were destroyed or severely damaged.

The New York Insurance Association also has tips for filing insurance claims related to storm and tornado damage:

- Property losses from tornadoes and windstorms are typically covered under standard auto, home, and business insurance policies.
- Homeowners insurance covers damage to both the structure of the home and personal belongings.
- Damage from fallen trees is typically covered and tree removal may also be covered.
- Contact your insurance company representative as soon as possible.
- Carefully document and take photographs/video of any and all damage.
- You may make temporary or immediate repairs to prevent further damage. Save all receipts for any expenses incurred in making repairs.

- Do not make permanent repairs before contacting your insurance company.

If you have specific questions about your policy, contact your insurance company. If you need further help contact the New York State Department of Financial Services at 1-800-339-1759.

Medical Marijuana Bill Signed into Law

Governor Cuomo signed a bill this week that establishes a medical marijuana program for New York State. The new law includes provisions to ensure medical marijuana is reserved only for patients with serious conditions and is dispensed and administered in a manner that protects public health and safety.

The law establishes a certification and registry process for physicians to administer the drug, and to be prescribed medical marijuana, a patient must receive a certification from a licensed practitioner who must register with the Department of Health and be qualified to treat the serious condition for which the patient is seeking treatment. The law includes tough penalties for individuals and physicians who abuse the medical marijuana program.

More details about the law are available on the [Governor's website](#).

Take Precautions to Protect Yourself from Ticks

Ticks may be tiny insects, but they can carry the bacteria that causes Lyme disease, a serious illness. Lyme disease can affect people of any age, and people who spend time in grassy and wooded environments are at an increased risk of exposure. Here are some tips for avoiding contact with ticks:

- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks easily.

- Wear enclosed shoes, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt. Tuck pant legs into socks or boots and shirt into pants.
- Check clothes and any exposed skin frequently for ticks while outdoors and check again once indoors.
- Consider using insect repellent. Follow label directions.
- Stay on cleared, well-traveled trails. Avoid contacting vegetation.
- Avoid sitting directly on the ground or on stone walls.
- Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening.

In addition, I co-sponsored legislation to create the 21st Century Workgroup for the Disease Elimination and Reduction, which has passed both houses. The group would be made up of experts in diseases, infection, and public health and will work on the development of effective vaccines against diseases, including Lyme.

For more information on protection from tick bites and Lyme disease, visit the [New York State Department of Health's website](#).

July is Battery Recycling Month

In July, OCRRA is partnering with local trash haulers to collect alkaline batteries from households in Onondaga County. Just send an [email to OCRRA](#) with your name and mailing address, and they will mail a free yellow battery bag. Put the old alkaline batteries in the bag and place it on top of a closed garbage can or trash bag any time during the month of July. (Do not put yellow bags in the blue bin as batteries are not recycled at the same location as blue bin items.) The trash hauler will collect the yellow bag and bring it to OCRRA for recycling.

Help for Seniors to Purchase Food at Farmers' Markets

Farmers' market checks have been distributed across the state as part of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. The program provides checkbooks worth \$20 to low-income New Yorkers age 60 and older to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. In this area, checks are available at county agencies on aging.

Checks are available for low-income New Yorkers 60 or over, earning \$1,800 or less per month for a single or \$2,426 per month for a couple. The program provides them with the means to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers selling at community farmers' markets. A pocket folder with instructions on how and where to use the checks to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local farmers at the market will be included with each checkbook.