

County OKs tornado alarm system

By TIM RICHARD
For a full year, Sue Kuhn of Beverly Hills has been fighting a frustrating battle with bureaucracy and county-local politics.
But Thursday she was proclaiming "I'm jubilant" and hugging anyone in sight as the Oakland County Board of Commissioners acted to set up a county-wide tornado siren system by the end of the year.
"We're going to have peace of mind," Mrs. Kuhn said when she had calmed down. The spectre of another tornado striking with almost no warning has haunted her and other Oakland residents since the storm of 1976.

IN TWIN ACTIONS, the board of commissioners unanimously:
•Authorized the county executive to take bids for a series of alert sirens.
•Accepted a federal grant for implementing the system with a radio-controlled communications system. Altogether, 120 sirens will be sounded by the pressing of a single button at Detroit Metropolitan Airport where the National Weather Service is located.
Later, amid much wry joking, the county board voted to accept the resignation of Joseph Dent of West

Bloomfield as director of civil defense-disaster control. Dent had taken much heat for the slowness in setting up a countywide program.

MEANWHILE, the argument over control of the civil defense post showed signs of being renewed. County Executive Daniel T. Murphy offered the board of commissioners a reorganization plan which changed the civil defense post from a separate division in the department of public services to the jurisdiction of the emergency medical service (EMS) in the same department.
The board is expected to take several weeks to act on Murphy's reorganization plan.

Commissioner Larry Pernick (D-Southfield) fielded a Democratic plan to shift the civil defense-disaster control program to Sheriff Johannes Spreen, who also happens to be a Democrat.
Pernick will argue that both the state and Genesee County place civil defense in the hands of police agencies because those departments are always the first called on for help.
While Murphy and many supporters of county executive government espe-

cially Republicans) prefer to unify every function possible under the executive, Pernick remained confident he could persuade commissioners the sheriff's department is best able to run the program.

THE 1976 TORNADO that devastated parts of West Bloomfield Township, Farmington Hills and other communities prompted Mrs. Kuhn's drive for a unified countywide alert system. Commissioners were moved by a letter Mrs. Kuhn distributed from Marian Lafrate, a West Bloomfield housewife who wrote:

"The loss of my leg is a physical tragedy I must face every day, the rest of my life. My mother will never walk again without the use of a brace."

"The horror of that night has emotionally affected those loved ones around me very deeply. I think what my husband and sister went through was even more damaging mentally than the physical scars my mother and I must bear."

"In my husband's case, it was to leave a love-filled home for a much anticipated basketball game with my son and to return to a mass of rubble, wife and mother-in-law both in shock on the floor, your one-year-old child missing, hysterically begging to get the injured to a hospital yet unable to move them."
"One family in West Bloomfield Estates" is still without their home and have no idea as to when, if ever, they will be able to return. This gentleman visits the rubble often, and my heart breaks as tears keep coming to his eyes, and I realize that he is still not himself."

THE COUNTYWIDE alert system is expected to be in operation by next tornado season, a year after the money package was approved by the county board and two years after the March 20, 1976 devastation.

The sirens will be activated by radio from the National Weather Service at Metropolitan Airport. The system will include 48 new sirens, 70 refurbished sirens and a communications system.
The system would be expanded in future years until there are 190 sirens covering 95 per cent of the county in 1980.
Local agencies will be able to sound

sirens independently in their own communities.
New siren equipment will cost \$233,000 and installation \$71,000 for a total of \$304,000.

Of this, the federal government will put up half, or \$152,000; the county 24 per cent, or \$73,000; and local units 26 per cent, or \$79,000.



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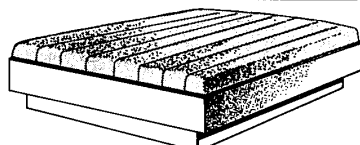
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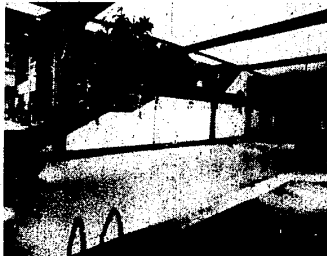
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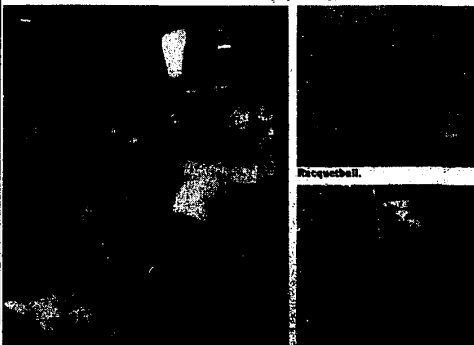
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