

SEVERE STORM PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 2nd

Storm observing, reporting procedures and safety to be emphasized

The 2009 storm season in North Texas was a typically busy season. Twenty tornadoes were reported across the area, and destructive windstorms, large hail, and deadly flooding all made appearances in our area. The toll on life and property was significant, with many casualties and damage in the tens of millions of dollars.

The 2010 severe weather season is fast approaching. Five tornadoes were confirmed in Northeast Texas on January 20th, so in many ways, storm season is already here. Are you ready for whatever this year has in store? Do you have a severe weather plan at your home and your workplace? Can you recognize the clues that suggest large hail, flash flooding, or a tornado is possible? Do you want to become part of the severe weather warning system in your county? As part of its area-wide weather preparedness campaign, the National Weather Service in Fort Worth will answer these and many other questions at the Skywarn severe weather program on Tuesday, March 2nd, from 7:00 to 9:00 PM. The program will be held at the City of Red Oak City Hall, at 200 Lakeview Parkway, and is held in partnership with Ellis County Emergency Management.

The 2010 program will discuss thunderstorm formation, severe weather production, and features associated with severe storms. The presentation will also review tornado formation and behavior, non-threatening clues which may be mistaken for significant features, and safety when thunderstorms threaten. The program will discuss spotter operations and recommended reporting procedures. The two-hour presentation will be in multimedia format, featuring numerous pictures of storms and nearly 25 minutes of storm video clips.

“We have some new material in the 2010 spotter training program”, said Mark Fox, Warning Coordination Meteorologist at the Fort Worth NWS Office. “We will present the information in the form of a checklist for the attendees to utilize. Most of the storm photos and video clips are different this year. We have reworked many of our graphics. We’ll have more identification cases, and we’ll discuss the operational aspects of storm spotters in detail”.

The fundamental purpose of the spotter training - and of the storm spotter network as a whole - remains unchanged. “We could not do our job as well as we do without storm spotters. Radar is a great tool, but it only tells us part of a storm’s story. Spotter observations complement the data we use to analyze storms. The combination of spotter reports and radar data gives us the best possible picture of the storms and what’s going on inside them”.

The program is free and open to the public. “By coming to this program, you will learn a lot about thunderstorms”, Fox said. “Even if you don’t become an active storm spotter, you will learn about how storms work and the visual clues you can identify when storms are in your area. We will discuss severe weather safety tips. This will better prepare yourself and your family for the threats that storms pose”.

The Ellis County severe weather program is one of over 55 that the Fort Worth NWS Office will conduct between January and early April 2010. The National Weather Service in Fort Worth

provides forecasts, warnings, and weather services for 46 counties in north and north-central Texas. For more information on severe weather and the National Weather Service, visit the Fort Worth Forecast Office's website at <http://www.weather.gov/fortworth>. For more information about joining the Ellis County Skywarn spotter group please visit the Ellis County Amateur Radio Club's website at <http://www.wd5ddh.org>.