Northern Cook County Skywarn

Weather Net Operations

And Reporting Criteria

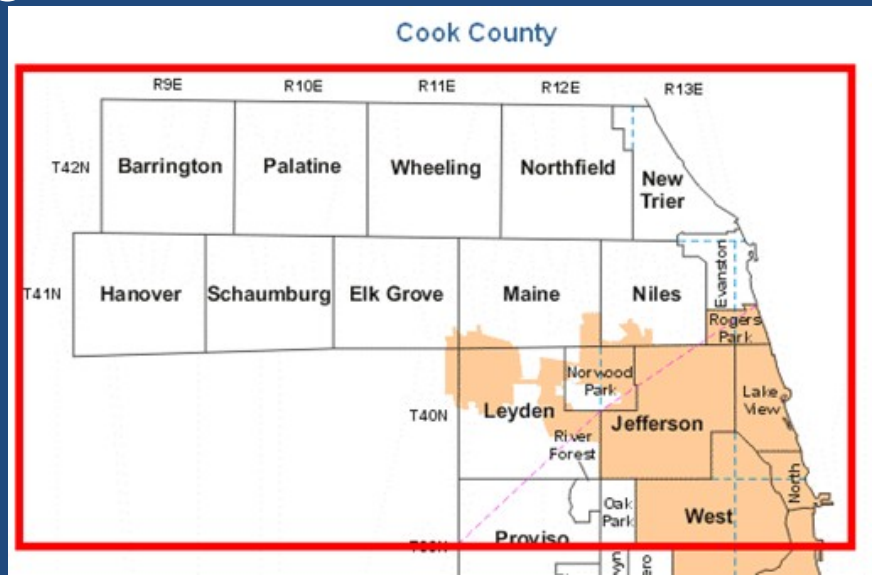
February 27, 2012

Agenda

- Why This is Important
- Net/Repeater Modes
- Reporting Criteria
- Weather Spotter Tips

Why This is Important

- We provide spotter reporting coverage for:
  - East: Lake Michigan
  - North: Lake County Line
  - West: DuPage County Line
  - South: Downtown Chicago



Watches, Warnings, Advisories

- An Advisory is issued when weather conditions impact our lives in ways that are not a direct threat to life and property but ignoring them may lead to hazardous conditions.
- A Watch is issued to allow time for preparation and planning for weather threats.
- A Warning is issued when a threat is occurring or imminent and action is needed to protect life and property.

Net/Repeater Mode

- Normal (Green)
  - Advisory has been issued for coverage area.
  - Repeater operates normally.
- Restricted Mode (Yellow)
  - Watch has been issued for coverage area.
  - Repeater operates normally. Keep conversations short. Yield to Net Control Station.
- Directed Mode (Red)
  - Warning has been issued for coverage area.
  - Repeater is only open for emergency traffic, severe reports, or questions about the storm.

Reporting Criteria

- Urgent Concerns – REPORT RIGHT AWAY
  - Tornado
  - Funnel Cloud
  - Rotating Wall Cloud
  - Flash Flooding
  - Damage to Structures

Reporting Criteria

- High Concerns
  - Hail 3/4” in diameter or larger (penny size)
  - Wind speed greater than 58 mph
  - Persistent non-rotating wall cloud
  - Rainfall 1” or more in one hour
  - A rapid rise of any river, creek, etc.
  - Snowfall amounts greater than 1” per hour or 35 MPH winds with ¼ mile or less visibility (blizzard)

Reporting Criteria

- Low/Moderate Concern
  - Hail less than ¾” in diameter
  - Wind speed 40 MPH and greater
  - Rain ¼” or greater in 15 min period
  - Water over the curb, blocking roads, affecting homes, businesses and roads
  - Cloud features suggesting storm organization and rotation
  - Other locally-defined criteria

Weather Spotter Tips - Observation

- 360 Degree View
- Always be observant of the environment around you.
- Lightning is a common hazard. Stay in your vehicle.
- DO NOT attempt to drive or walk across a flooded roadway or low water crossing.
- IMPORTANT: The decision where and when to spot, if at all, always remains with the trained weather spotter. SAFETY FIRST!

Weather Spotting Tips - Reporting

- Listen to the instructions put forth by the Net Control.
- Conform to the reporting requirements of the NWS.
- Report the correct information in a timely manner .
- Use TEL = Time, Event, Location.
- Ask yourself, “If I were the only person making this report, would I change anything?”

Weather Spotting Tips - Reporting

- NCS looks for:
  - Source
  - Time
  - Event/Observation
  - Location (Nearest Cross Streets & municipality name)

Reporting Exercise

A supercell is moving through Northern Cook County, producing a variety of weather. A net has been called. Your assignment...

NCS (The facilitator) will toss you a weather event. You must report that weather event from the location specified (home/work).

Exercise Time Limit: 0:05:00

Do…

- …attend spotter classes as often as possible (Basic/Advanced)
- …have a watch, pencil, note pad, cell phone, and the "color" Quick Spotter Reference Guide with you when spotting
- …make an effort to provide an accurate report, including the time, location, condition (what you experienced/saw)
- …reference your location to the nearest 1/10 mile and one of the 8 compass points…such as…"1.5 miles NW of downtown Park Ridge"
- …provide the direction you are looking while viewing a rotating wall cloud, funnel cloud, or tornado
- …place the safety of you and your family first, the report is second
- …take a deep breath, try to remain calm, and get the job done
- …utilize communication channels that have been set up for you or your group and follow proper protocols, procedures and formats

Don't...

- ...make it difficult for emergency response people (emergency management, law enforcement, fire fighters, Red Cross, etc.) to do their job
- ...assume that you have a tornado just because you see something that looks like a funnel cloud; you must see some indication of ground-based, rotational effects (rotating debris/dirt) underneath or very close to the funnel cloud in order to classify it as a tornado and there may be very little of any funnel cloud
- ...get caught up in the game of trying to be the first person to call-in a tornado report - spotting is a game of being 100% correct...it's not a game of being the first.
- ...call-in or relay a report if you're not sure what you're looking at - you must be 100% sure; after your safety, accuracy is the highest priority, – better no report rather than a erroneous one
- …go looking for damage or wander around in an area hit by a serious storm. That's a job for emergency or NWS personnel.

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