



The West Texas

# TWISTER



Spring 2003 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE FORECAST OFFICE LUBBOCK TEXAS

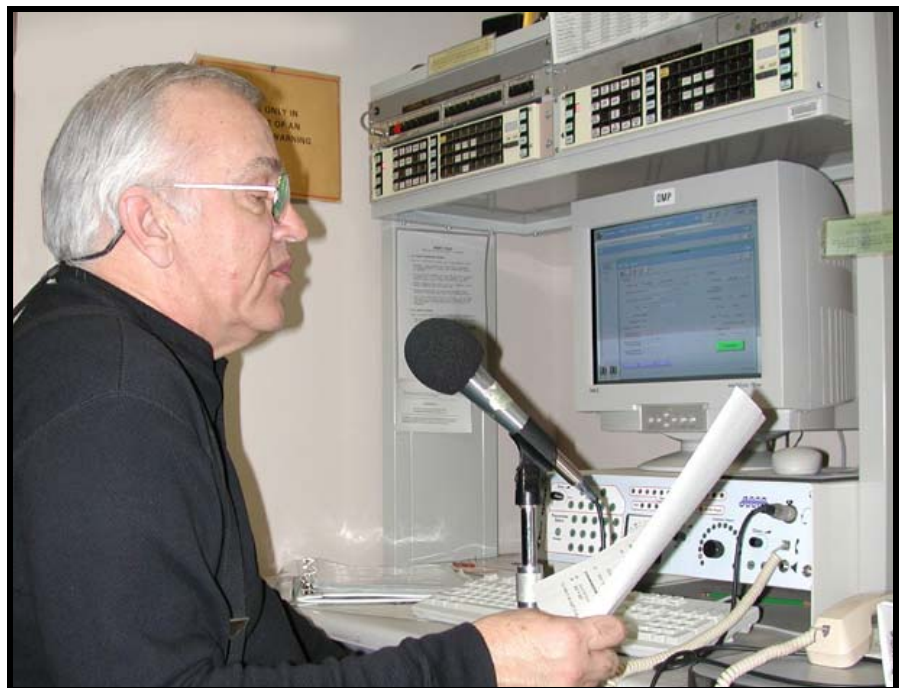
## Lubbock NOAA Weather Radio Turns 25!

By Ed Calianese

On March 13<sup>th</sup> 1978, NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) station WXK-79, the voice of the National Weather Service (NWS) Office in Lubbock, began broadcasting continuous weather information to the citizens of the South Plains. The transmitter is located near New Deal and broadcasts on a frequency of 162.400 Mhz. A number of important changes have occurred to NWR over the past 25 years and as a result, it remains one of the most effective ways to receive NWS severe weather warnings and forecasts today.

One of the most important changes occurred in the spring of 2001 when we automated the broadcast of severe weather warnings. The process of broadcasting warnings, which could take a couple minutes, now takes just seconds. Computer software receives the warning message immediately after a forecaster issues it. Coding within the warning message allows the computer to send out specific encoding that programmable NWRs receive causing them to activate a tone alert seconds after the warning is issued. The computerized voice has already been upgraded once since it was implemented and will be improved again in the next year. (Continued on page 2)

- What's In This Edition...**
- ◆ Severe Weather Awareness Day
  - ◆ Co-operative Program News
  - ◆ Severe Weather Product Suite
  - ◆ StormReady
  - ◆ SKYWARN Spotter Training Schedule
  - ◆ ...and more



Jerry English reads a weather statement on the NOAA Weather Radio.

(continued from page 1—NOAA Weather Radio Turns 25!)

In addition to broadcasting continuous weather information, NWR has been used to disseminate non-weather related emergency information through the Civil Emergency Message. The transmission of these types of messages are requested by and coordinated with the Emergency Management community. NWR is also being used to help law enforcement officials disseminate Amber Alerts to the public as a result of a recent agreement between the NWS and the Texas Department of Emergency Management.

### **Additional NWR transmitters coming soon!**

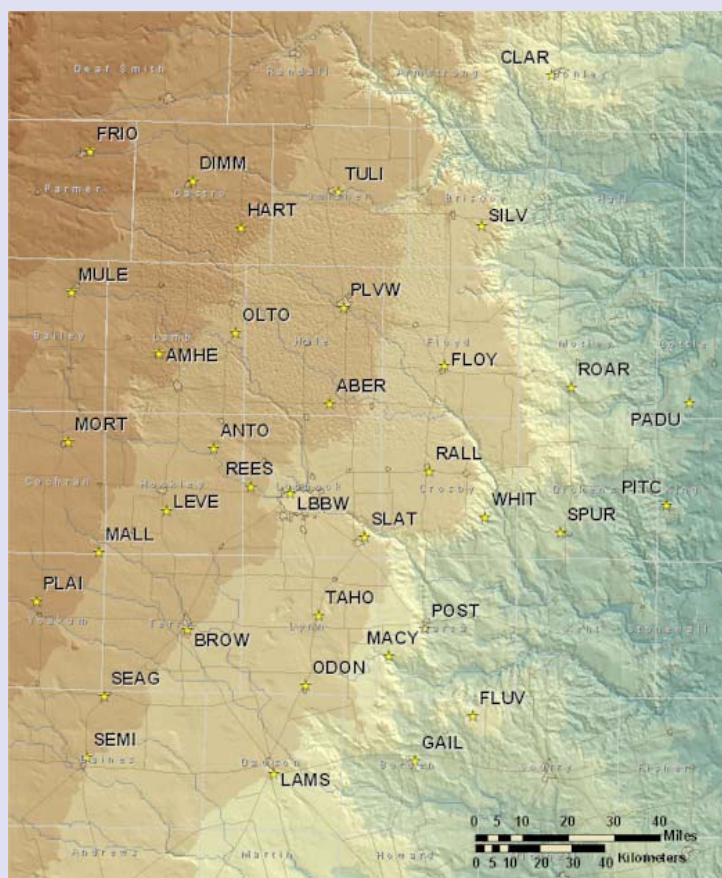
NWR coverage in the South Plains and southern Texas Panhandle will increase late this spring as new transmitter sites are expected to be installed near Plainview in Hale County and in Summerfield in Castro County. These two 1000-watt transmitters will have effective listening ranges of up to 40 miles and will dramatically improve the NWR coverage between Amarillo and Lubbock. Hereford, Friona, Dimmitt, and Muleshoe will be in listening range of the Summerfield transmitter and Floydada and Tulia will be in listening range of the Plainview site. The Plainview transmitter will broadcast on 162.525 Mhz and the Summerfield site will broadcast at 162.500 Mhz.

## Texas Tech MesoNet

As this map of stations indicates, the West Texas MesoNet has 36 sites operational across the South Plains, southern Texas Panhandle and the Rolling Plains. The newest station was constructed in Cottle County southwest of Paducah in early February. Nearly continuous weather data are available from all of these sites including temperature, wind speed and direction, relative humidity, precipitation, and soil temperature. In addition to these valuable data, which have already proven to be very helpful to NWS forecasters, Texas Tech University personnel associated with the MesoNet project also occasionally launch weather balloons that measure pressure, temperature, dew point, and wind speed and direction above the ground when significant weather threatens the region.

All of these datasets are available on the West Texas MesoNet website:

<http://www.mesonet.ttu.edu>



Map courtesy of Mark Condor—Texas Tech MesoNet



Happy, Texas tornado May 5, 2002. Five miles west of Happy looking west.

## Severe Weather Awareness Week

Governor Rick Perry has proclaimed the week of March 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Texas. During this week, the National Weather Service in coordination with the Texas Division of Emergency Management will highlight various aspects of severe weather and discuss safety rules in an attempt to focus public attention on severe weather preparedness. Severe Weather Awareness Week is a perfect time to review and fine tune your severe weather safety plans. Every Texan should know where to go and what to do when severe weather threatens. The NWS in Lubbock will staff a booth in the South Plains Mall March 6-8, from which we will provide free material on all aspects of severe weather safety. We'll also be at the University Center at Texas Tech University on March 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Stop by and see us!

## The NWS's Multi-tiered Severe Weather Product Suite

### Outlooks

Issued between 5am and 6am each morning to detail our severe weather expectations. On days severe weather is anticipated, this is also updated at 1130 am. Used for daily planning purposes and to increase the awareness of potential severe weather threats.

### Watches

Conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather in your area. Remain alert for approaching or developing storms. Watches are issued for portions of states and are usually in effect for up to six hours.

### Warnings

Severe weather has been observed or is imminent. Take action now! Warnings are issued on a county-by-county basis and are usually in effect for up to an hour.

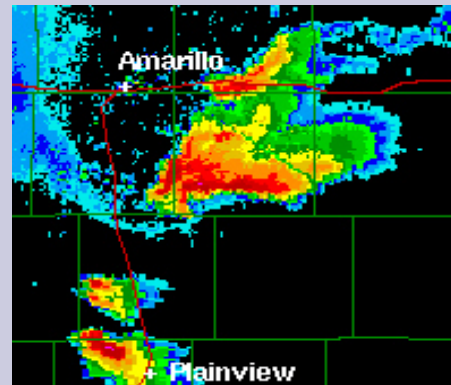
## Severe Weather Safety Tips

### *Before the storm...*

- Have a plan for you and your family
- Know what to do and where to go
- Practice your plan
- Own a Weather Radio with battery backup power and a warning alarm
- Listen to radio, TV, and Weather Radio for storm information and updates

### *If a warning is issued for your area, or if threatening weather approaches...*

- Move to your building's pre-designated shelter (such as a basement)
- If underground shelter is unavailable, move to an interior room on the lowest floor
- Avoid windows and outer walls
- Get out of vehicles and mobile homes and into a sturdier shelter



## Coop – News

by Johnny S. Wallace, DAPM

I would like to welcome our newest Coop-Observer located at Vigo Park in northeast Swisher County. This site is important not only to the local community but also to the National Weather Service. It will allow us to gather data from a site very near Mackenzie Lake and in an area that was void of data.

I was again honored to present Length Of Service Awards to the observers at Morton and at SouthCamp on the "6666" Ranch. I have other awards due for presentation over the next few months for this year. The outstanding dedication of our long time observers makes all of us in the National Weather Service proud to be associated with them.

I mentioned in the last Newsletter that the Weather Service is continuing to develop a web-based reporting procedure so observers with computers and on-line access can input their temperature and precipitation data over the Internet. I don't have much more information about this new program, but it is still in the "testing" phase. As I find out more, I will pass it along to all observers.

I'd like to emphasize how important it is to mail your monthly forms as soon as possible. Automation continues to drive the processing of forms and publication of your data to the world. John Lipe, the Service Hydrologist for West Texas, has been helping out with the coop program for many years and continues to get more involved. His help is greatly appreciated. John has been writing more software for use in processing your data and getting it displayed on our web site. John continues to expand this software, which allows us to get more information out to the public in a shorter period of time. Your data, which is updated daily, is available on our climate web page, "Coop Observer Data" @ <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/lub/climate/climate.html>

I'll close by again saying, we at the NWS thank all of our coop observers for their outstanding service.



Ninety percent of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related. Many laws and regulations help local emergency managers deal with hazardous chemical spills, search and rescue operations, and medical crises but there are few guidelines that deal with hazardous weather operations. Recognizing this need, the National Weather Service has partnered with the Emergency Management Community to develop guidelines to help cities, counties, and towns implement procedures to reduce the impact of weather-related disasters.

StormReady guidelines are based on the applying community's population so small towns have the same opportunity for recognition as large cities. StormReady communities have multiple ways to receive severe weather warnings and to alert the public to the threat, they have established a 24-hour warning point and EOC from which emergency response efforts can be coordinated, they promote the importance of public readiness through education and training, and have a plan that is utilized during disasters. Because of their hard work to plan for and prepare for disasters such as tornadoes and floods, StormReady communities are also better prepared to handle all disasters, both natural and manmade.

Any community that earns StormReady certification will be part of a press briefing to announce their accomplishment. Also, the NWS will supply two StormReady signs that the community can use to proudly show off their accomplishments. If you are interested, please contact Ed Calianese at 806-745-3916 ext. 223 for more details.

### 2003 SKYWARN Spotter Training Schedule

The following SKYWARN spotter training meetings are open to the public this season:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Spotter Group</b>	<b>Location</b>
February 17	700 pm	Motley County	Matador Fire Dept
February 18	700 pm	Childress County	Childress Fire Dept
February 24	700 pm	Stonewall County	Aspermont Fire Dept
March 5	700 pm	Kent County	Jayton Community Center
March 6	700 pm	Briscoe County	Quitaque Community Center
March 10	700 pm	Lamb County	Littlefield City Hall
March 17	700 pm	Floyd County	Floydada Fire Dept
March 18	230 pm	Hale County	Plainview Library
March 18	600 pm	Hale County	Plainview Library
April 7	700 pm	Hockley County	Levelland Police Dept
April 8	730 pm	Floyd County	Lockney Fire Dept
April 14	730 pm	Lynn County	Wilson School Cafeteria
April 14	730 pm	Crosby County	Crosbyton Fire Dept

See <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/lub/safety/spotter.htm> for updates/additions

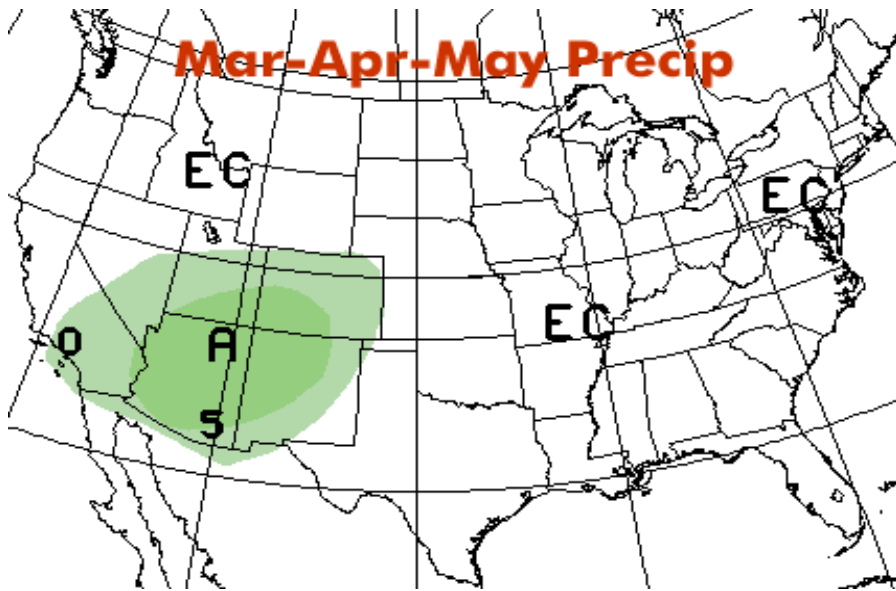


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**In This Issue...**

Severe Weather Awareness Day, NOAA Weather Radio, StormReady, SKYWARN Spotter Training Schedule, Coop News, and more....



El Nino is forecast to weaken and become a negligible factor after about May - leaving only the influence of long term trends on the forecasts beyond April - June. The outlook for March -May 2003 for the South Plains calls for equal chances of either above normal, normal, or below normal precipitation. El Nino increases storm activity in the southern storm track in springtime elevating the chances of above normal precipitation for much of the southern U.S. from California - across the Southwest and the southern Rockies to Texas and onto the Gulf coast and Florida. Nearly all statistical and oceanic model prediction tools for the equatorial Pacific indicate weakening El Nino conditions through the spring with a consensus of tools indicating a return to normal conditions by the summer.

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