



The Mid-South Chronicle

National Weather Service
Memphis, TN
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Volume VI, Issue 1

Spring 2006 Edition

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November Tornadoes Ravage Northwest Tennessee

By Jason Beaman
Meteorologist

The transition of seasons is always a tumultuous time in the world of weather for the Mid-South. As summer turns into fall, the lingering heat and humidity of summer can clash with newly formed cold air moving south out of Canada. It's often a recipe for severe weather and November 15, 2005 was one of those days where the ingredients came together.

Your National Weather Service in Memphis, TN was prepared several days in advance for the likelihood of a severe weather outbreak across the Mid-South. By the day of the event, a rare high risk outlook for severe weather was issued by the Storm Prediction Center. High risk outlooks are only reserved for those days when the atmospheric conditions have lined up perfectly for severe weather. The NWS Memphis followed suit by issuing very strongly worded Special Weather Statements which emphasized the expected severe weather outbreak.

The setup was classic. A powerful upper level disturbance, with cold air at the mid-



Severe Damage to brick home in Paris, TN

dle and upper levels of the atmosphere, traversed across the central Plains and toward the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valleys. A strong surface low developed over extreme northeast Oklahoma during the morning hours of the 15th. The low pressure system rapidly deepened during the day while racing northeast toward St. Louis.

Continued on Page 4...

NWS Improves Tornado Rating System

The National Weather Service has announced plans to implement the Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale to rate tornadoes to replace the original Fujita (F) Scale. The EF Scale will continue to rate tornadoes on a scale from zero to five, but ranges in wind speed will be more accurate with the improved rating scale. The National Weather Service has approved the EF Scale and expects it to be fully implemented by February 2007.

"The EF Scale takes into account additional variables which will provide a more accurate indication of tornado strength,"

said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. David L. Johnson, director of the National Weather Service. "The EF Scale will provide more detailed guidelines that will allow the National Weather Service to more accurately rate tornadoes that strike in the United States."

The F Scale was developed in 1971 by Dr. T. Theodore Fujita to rate tornadoes and estimate associated wind speed based on the damage they cause. The EF Scale refines and improves the original scale.

Continued on Page 5...

Severe Weather



Awareness Week

Arkansas	Feb 20-24
Tennessee	Feb 19-24
Mississippi	Feb 20-24
Missouri	Mar 13-18

Meet the Newest NWS Memphis Employee - Rich Okulski

Interviewed by Dan Valle
Forecaster

Rich Okulski, is the new Warning Coordination Meteorologist at your Mid South National Weather Service Forecast Office. He replaces Scott Cordero, who accepted a promotion and transfer to be the Meteorologist in Charge at the forecast office in Corpus Christi, TX. Rich serves as the outreach program manager for the office. He is the main point of contact when dealing with schools, emergency management officials and the media. He is also the evaluation officer for the office's warning program.

Rich was born on October 6th, 1967 which makes him 38 years old. He is married to Dr. Gayl Anglin and has a 7 year old child with one more on the way in June. Rich was raised on Long Island, NY. He became interested in the weather after the historic 1978 blizzard crippled the region. His fascination was furthered by an energetic earth science teacher in 8th grade.

Rich is a 1989 graduate of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

After college, Rich worked for six months at a private weather firm called Compu-Weather which had an office in New York City. He then moved on to the United States Army where he spent three years in Germany and the Persian Gulf. Rich saw combat service in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait where he was awarded a Valorous Unit Award and a Bronze Star Medal.

After serving his country, Rich entered the National Weather Service. His first job was in 1993 as an intern in Phoenix, AZ. He was promoted to a general forecaster in Medford, OR in 1995 where he helped to start the local aviation program. Next, he transferred to Tucson, AZ in 1996 and was promoted to a senior forecaster in 1998. While in Tucson, he



started the office's fire weather program. The office received a NOAA Bronze Medal for first NWS transfer of forecast responsibility from an existing office (WFO Phoenix) as part of fire weather modernization. As an incident meteorologist, Rich worked four wildfires during the tragic 2000 fire season. Later that year, Rich became the liaison meteorologist to the Region 3 Fire Land Management Agency in Albuquerque, NM.

Continued on Page 8...

2005 Year In Review

By Jody Aaron
Meteorologist

2005 may be mainly remembered as being warm and dry across the Mid South. As a result, severe weather was not as active as in other years. There were a total of 10 significant weather events that impacted the Mid South. There was one winter storm, four systems that resulted in tornadoes, and four tropical systems (Arlene, Dennis, Katrina, and Rita).

The tropical systems moved through the region from June 12 to September 22.

Among the significant events that impacted the region was March 22nd. Numerous severe thunderstorms and three confirmed tornadoes moved through the Mid South. Olive Branch MS (Desoto County) was struck by a

pair of tornadoes (F0 and F1) while Marie AR (Mississippi County) was affected by an F0.

Other noteworthy events include April 30th, an F1 tornado touched down northwest of Aberdeen, MS (Monroe County). On July 4th, 80 mph straight line winds plowed through Pochontas AR (Randolph County). On November 6th, winds of up to 120 mph impacted portions of Paris, TN (Henry County). The damage covered about 9 miles and was 300 yards wide at its largest. November 15th, Paris, TN was hit again, as a F2 tornado injured 13. Two more tornadoes (both F1) were reported in Friendship (Crocket County) and Greenfield, TN (Dyer County). Also, 90 mph straight lined winds were confirmed in Clover Bend, AR (Lawrence County) on that same day.

	Memphis	Jackson, TN	Jonesboro	Tupelo
Hottest Temp	100	98	101	99
Coldest Temp	18	11	14	18
Avg Temp/Departure	64.5*/+2.3	60.1/-0.1	61.2/+1.3	63.6/+2.2
Rain/Departure	40.01** -14.64	49.85* -5.20	35.33* -10.85	52.12 -3.74
Annual Records	*4 th Warmest **12 th lowest	*12 th lowest	*6 th lowest	

Oklahoma and Texas in Flames

By Rich Okulski

Warning Coordination Meteorologist

The Southern Plains states have experienced an extremely dry and warm winter. The state of Oklahoma is experiencing its driest winter since 1921. Abnormally dry and warm weather conditions are key ingredients for wildfires, in particular large grassfires for Oklahoma and portions of Texas.

Since November 1, 2005, a total of 1650 fires have burned 428,945 acres in the state of Oklahoma. Over 14,000 local, state and federal firefighters have responded to these fires.

Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry issued a statewide burn ban on November 15, 2005.

Portions of Texas are experiencing similar wildfire problems. Since January 1, 476 large wildfires (defined to be greater than 100 acres) have burned over 245,000 acres. The number of acres burned in 2006 already exceeds the number of acres burned in all of 2005!

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center predicts a

higher than normal probability of above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation through the end of April. Based on this prediction, it appears the wildfire threat for Oklahoma and Texas will continue into this spring.



Top: grass fire burns near oil rig in Guthrie, OK.



Left: House burns in Arlington, TX.

Photos courtesy of FOX news.

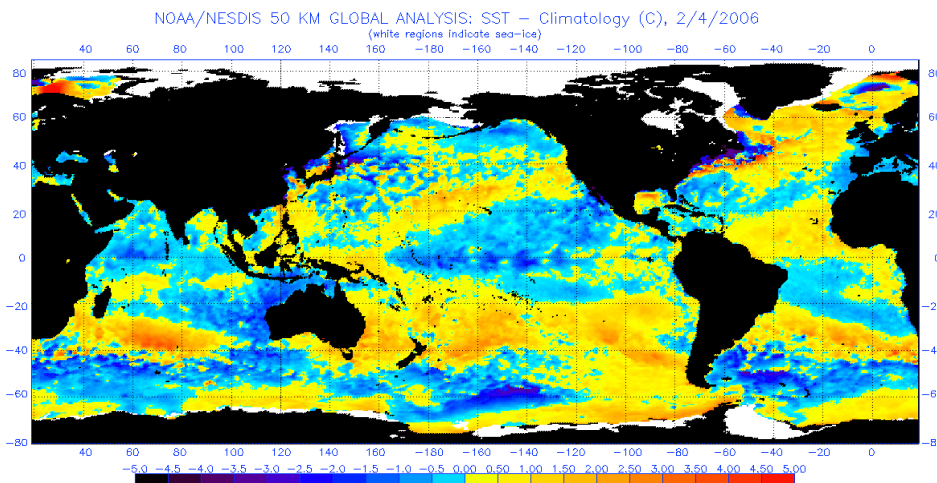
NOAA announces that La Niña has returned

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center announced the official return of La Niña. Oceanic sea surface temperatures have met the operational definition of La Niña for the

November through January period. La Niña is the periodic cooling of ocean waters in the east-central equatorial Pacific, which can impact the typical alignment of weather patterns around the globe. NOAA predicts this La Niña event will likely remain into late spring, and possibly into summer.

"In mid-January the atmosphere over the eastern North Pacific and western U.S. began to exhibit typical La Niña characteristics in response to the cooling in the tropical central Pacific Ocean," said Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "This pattern will favor continued drought in parts of the South and Southwest from Arizona to Arkansas and Louisiana, and above normal precipitation in the Northwest and the Tennessee Valley area."

Continued on Page 8...



Is it Drought or Just a Sense of Dry Humor?

By Jim Belles

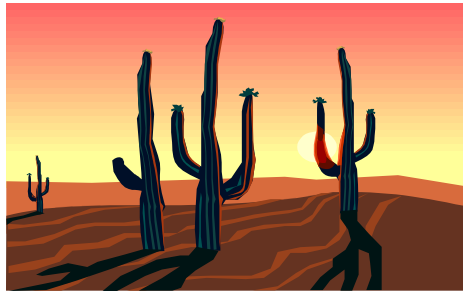
Meteorologist in Charge

Drought in the Mid-South? What does that mean? After all, it's not like we see sand dunes and people frantically running around looking for water. Our typical annual rainfall in the Mid-South ranges from 45 to 55 inches. Not too shabby, especially compared to locations out west that are lucky to receive 10 inches of annual rainfall.

The Glossary of Meteorology defines a drought as a period of abnormally dry weather, sufficiently prolonged for the lack of water to cause a serious hydrologic imbalance. That imbalance in the water supply could cause disruption to agriculture, a community's water-supply, or river navigation.

Unlike in the west, a drought in the Midsouth is not as obvious. Lawns remain green, lakes are still enjoyed and restrictions in water use are usually unheard of. Never-the-less agriculture can be affected. Because our region typically receives generous rainfall farmers generally don't rely on irrigation except for the rice crop in

eastern Arkansas. Consequently, once crops are planted in the spring the amount of rainfall becomes critical. In fact, two weeks of dry weather during the months of May, June and



July and crops can become significantly stressed to affect yields.

In winter agriculture is not affected by drought. The growing season has ended and the demands of evapotranspiration are small. The key to drought is whether we receive timely and sufficient rains in the spring and summer. So from an agriculture perspective drought really ends with the growing season. And even if rainfall is still below average during the win-

ter, there is generally enough moisture to start the next year's growing season. A drought will quickly develop however if rains don't come early.

The Mississippi river waterway is a major transportation link to the heartland of the United States. Drought or floods can have major economic consequences to not only our region but also to our country. Since a large portion of our water at Memphis comes from the Ohio River, rainfall in states like Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois has an impact on our water level.

To find out where drought conditions exist please check out the following website:

<http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>

The U.S. Drought Monitor is an excellent way of keeping abreast of the current drought situation in the Mid-south and throughout the United States.

November Tornadoes Continued (from Page 1)...

A cold front stretched from the low south to Texas. As the low moved northeast, it dragged the cold front into the Mid-South by mid afternoon. Very warm and moist air was present ahead of the front. Temperatures were in the upper 70s to near 80 degrees with dewpoints in the lower to middle 60s. This created a very unstable environment across the region. In addition, wind shear (the change of wind speed and direction and height) was very strong due to the presence of the surface and upper level low to the north and west.

What resulted was a line of severe thunderstorms that raked across the Mid-South during the afternoon of the 15th. Numerous reports of wind damage and hail were received. Hail was reported to be as large as golf balls in Shelby County, TN and as big as a

tennis ball in DeSoto County, MS. NWS storm damage teams confirmed the track of four tornadoes across northwest Tennessee. F-1 tornadoes were identified in Crockett, Gibson, and Weakley counties. The strongest tornado of the day, an F-2 on the Fujita scale with winds up to 150 mph, hit Paris, TN in Henry County. 30 homes were destroyed and several manufacturing plants were demolished. Thirteen people were injured, but fortunately there were no fatalities. Locally emergency management officials credited NOAA Weather Radio as the main reason why no fatalities occurred. Several people in homes and businesses received advanced warning of the tornadoes and took the proper action

to protect themselves. This event, as bad as it was, could have been a lot worse. Fortunately, the power of NOAA Weather Radio and local media was in display and proves that these sources of information are vital to saving lives.



“Timmy the Twister” Created to Communicate Severe Weather Risk

By Jim Belles
 Meteorologist In Charge

Smokey Bear, the beloved character of the USDA Forest Service, inspired several staff members from the Memphis, TN, Weather Forecast Office and the Lower Mississippi River Forecast Center to create “Timmy the Twister.”

Like Smokey, who notifies the public of fire danger, Timmy helps prepare the public by announcing the potential for severe weather.

Meteorologist-In-Charge Jim Belles kicked the concept around with Dan Valle and Scott Cordero (who now works in Corpus Christi, TX). They finalized a vision of the character they wanted, and Amanda Roberts put flesh to the Timmy graphic.

Timmy has appeared in a poster session at the National Weather Association Conference in St. Louis in October and the feedback was very positive.

Similar to the Smokey Bear signs at National Forests it should be something that should take hold across the most vulnerable tornado locations of our country. Additionally, the charac-

ter could be used as an 'eye catcher' for other statements on preparedness.

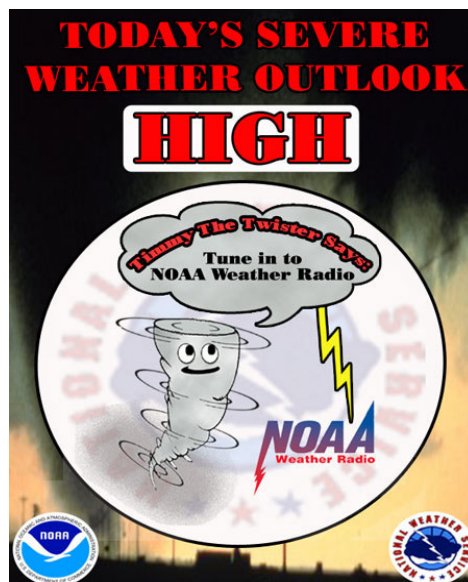
WFO Memphis persuaded the community of Pontotoc, MS to use “Timmy the Twister” in a sign in front of City Hall to announce the daily severe weather outlook. Every morning someone from the Emergency Operations Center checks the Hazardous

Weather Outlook and places the appropriate outlook (none, slight, moderate, or high) on the “Timmy the Twister” sign. The sign is visible to the entire community of 5,000 people since City Hall is located on Main Street in the heart of Pontotoc.

Four years ago, Pontotoc was devastated by an F3 tornado that killed six people and injured many others. The community responded in the wake of that tragedy by building 40 community shelters and over 400 individual shelters.

Citizens of Pontotoc take severe weather seriously and didn't hesitate when given the opportunity to display the “Timmy the Twister” sign. According to the Mayor of Pontotoc, Bill Rutledge “if we had any doubt about people noticing the sign we sure found out when the high risk for severe weather was posted...the public response was tremendous.”

For their improved effort and diligence the city of Pontotoc was recently recognized as a StormReady community.



NWS Improves Tornado Rating System Continued (from Page 1)...

It was developed by the Texas Tech University Wind Science and Engineering (WISE) Research Center, along with a forum of wind engineers, universities, private companies, government organizations, private sector meteorologists and NOAA meteorologists from across the country.

Limitations of the original F Scale may have led to inconsistent ratings, including possible overestimates of associated wind speeds. The EF Scale incorporates more damage indicators and degrees of damage than the original F Scale, allowing more detailed analysis and better correlation between damage and wind speed. The original F Scale historical data base will not change. An F5 tornado rated years ago is still an F5, but the wind speed associated with the tornado may have been somewhat less than previously estimated. A correlation between the original F Scale and the EF Scale has been developed. This makes it possible to express ratings in terms of one scale to the other, preserving the historical database.

Current F- Scale

Future EF Scale

F Number	Wind Speed (mph)	EF Number	Wind Speed (mph)
0	<73	0	<86
1	73-112	1	86-110
2	113-157	2	111-135
3	158-206	3	136-165
4	207-260	4	166-200
5	261-318	5	>200

Polygons - A Sub County Level Warning Methodology

By Rich Okulski

Warning Coordination Meteorologist

The National Weather Service has issued Tornado, Severe Thunderstorm and Flash Flood Warnings on a county wide basis since the 1970s. People are accustomed to seeing "The National Weather Service in Memphis has issued a Tornado Warning for Shelby County in southwest Tennessee until 945 pm..." Our knowledge of severe weather development and our observational tools such as the WSR-88D Doppler Radar has greatly improved over the past 30 years. We have the skill to issue these warnings at a resolution smaller than whole counties. The challenge is how to define and describe these higher resolution warnings.

Latitude/longitude point pairs have been included at the bottom of Tornado, Severe Thunderstorm and Flash Flood Warnings since the late 1990s. An example of such a warning is shown below (the LAT/LON pairs are highlighted in blue):

```
WFUS54 KMEG 152245
TORMEG
TNC023-113-152315-
/O.NEW.KMEG.TO.W.0052.051115T2245Z-
051115T2315Z/
```

```
BULLETIN - EAS ACTIVATION REQUESTED
TORNADO WARNING
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE MEMPHIS TN
445 PM CST TUE NOV 15 2005
```

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN MEMPHIS HAS ISSUED A

* TORNADO WARNING FOR...
CHESTER COUNTY IN SOUTHWEST TENNESSEE
MADISON COUNTY IN SOUTHWEST TENNESSEE

* UNTIL 515 PM CST

* AT 442 PM CST...NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE DOPPLER RADAR INDICATED A TORNADO 7 MILES SOUTHEAST OF BEMIS...OR ABOUT 8 MILES NORTHWEST OF HENDERSON...MOVING NORTHEAST AT 45 MPH.

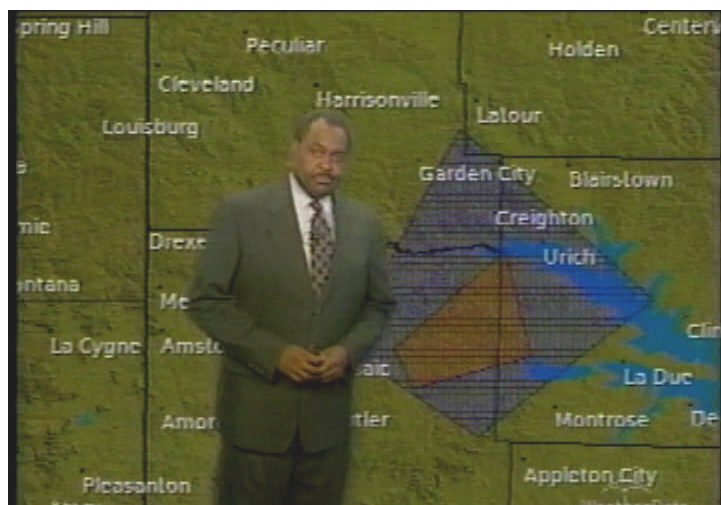
* THE TORNADO IS WILL BE NEAR...
MIFFLIN BY 455 PM CST

```
LAT...LON 3561 8861 3559 8857 3552 8851 3550
      8859 3547 8863 3541 8876 3554 8886 3557
      8886 3570 8861
```

If you plot the point pairs, it depicts the "area of maximum impact" or polygon. The rest of the county outside the polygon is often unaffected by a severe weather hazard, but

people take cover because they are in the warning! The NWS conducted a 25 office demonstration in 2005. We found that using polygons reduces the false alarm area or area which did not need to be in warning by up to 72%! Dr. Daniel S. Sutter, an economics professor at the University of Oklahoma estimated that polygon warnings would save the U.S. economy \$50 million dollars per year, and reducing the size of tornado warnings by 75% would have the same value as reducing the false alarm rate to 0%!

The senior leadership of the National Weather Service approved the transition plan from a county based warning system to a polygon based system in December. It will take several years to fully transition to polygons. Dissemination technology such as NOAA Weather Radio and the Emergency Alert System will need to adapt to polygon warnings. Television meteorologists are already adapting. A TV meteorologist in Kansas City in the picture below displayed a polygon based tornado warning (in red) within a severe thunderstorm warning (in purple). In the past, an NWS forecaster would have to choose either a Tornado or Severe Thunderstorm Warning for four whole counties. The pic-



ture above is by far a more accurate meteorological description of the event.

I gave a polygon presentation in the spring of 2005 at the National Severe Weather Workshop in Norman, Oklahoma. At the end of the presentation, a Wal-Mart executive pulled me aside to discuss polygons. He told me his company was very interested in polygons. His stores shut down operations during Tornado Warnings for whole counties as part of their safety plan. A finer resolution warning saves his company money and increases employee and customer confidence that they are taking shelter for a good reason. I can think of no better reason for the NWS to transition to polygon warnings.

New Climate Web Pages

By Anthony Cavlucci
Senior Forecaster and Webmaster

The NWS Memphis website strives to contain pertinent information to serve the public and our partners. Over the years, many enhancements have occurred. The addition of our corporate web image and the latest radar imagery are two examples of the progress the NWS has made over the past 6 years.

Continuing our progress, the NWS has produced a new climate web page.

This is to unify our services so that it will be easier for you to find climate information you need. The customer will look for that information in the same places throughout the NWS.

Although each page is similar, we will still have our original climate. It is located under the "Local Data/Records" tab and can be accessed from the left column navigation bar. Under "Climate", click on the "More..." link

and you will be taken directly to the "Local Data/Records" page. The first link will take you back to our old, familiar climate page.

For the link to our new climate, go to midsouthweather.com. Look along the left navigation bar under the "Climate" heading. Click on "Local" to see our new climate page.

National Weather Service Climate - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: <http://www.weather.gov/climate/index.php?wfo=meg>

National Weather Service Forecast Office
Memphis, TN

Home News Organization Search

Local forecast by "City, St"
City, St Go

Observed Weather Reports

1. Product »
 Daily Climate Report (CLI)
 Preliminary Climatology Data (CF6)
 Record Event Report (RER)
 Monthly Weather Summary (CLM)
 Regional Summary (RTP)
 State Summary (Temp/Precip)

2. Location »
 Memphis Intl Apt
 Tupelo Regional Apt
 Jackson TN
 Jonesboro

3. Timeframe »
 Most Recent
 Archived Data:
 February 8th, 2006
 February 5th, 2006
 February 4th, 2006
 February 3rd, 2006
 February 2nd, 2006
 February 1st, 2006

4. View »

Storm Event Database (SPC)
Storm Data (HCDC)

Product Description:
 DAILY CLIMATE REPORT - issued daily:
 Detailed daily weather statistics (usually for yesterday), including temperature, precipitation, degree days, wind, humidity, sunrise/sunset, and record temperature data for the following day. Precipitation data includes both calendar year and water year totals, percent of normal values, and comparisons to normal. This product is available for up to 2 months.

Click here to provide comments on this service.

Rich Okulski Continued (from page 2)...

In 2002, Rich moved to National Weather Service Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD to become the National Severe Weather Program Manager. His accomplishments include completion of the VTEC dissemination code project and the implementation of the Watch By County product suite which the NWS uses for the issuance of severe weather watches. Rich is also one of the early proponents of polygon (e.g sub county) based warn-

ings which the NWS will transition to in the future. In 2005, Rich was named the Executive Officer to the National Weather Service Director, Brigadier General (ret.) David L. Johnson. Rich provided support to the National Weather Service's Southern Region in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In December of 2005, Rich arrived in the Mid South.

Rich's professional passion is fire weather forecasting, in particular site

specific (spot) forecasting. He says that he loves the challenge of having to account for complex terrain and mesoscale weather factors. Severe weather is a close second. His favorite color is blue; favorite food is Mexican; favorite music is rock from the 60s through the 80s; favorite band is Def Leppard. Rich says that he is happy to be here and is excited to work with a great staff and great bunch of people.

La Niña Continued (from page 3)...

Periodic precipitation in the drought areas and dryness in the stormy areas are also typical within the larger scale climate pattern described above.

Internationally, La Niña impacts during the Northern Hemisphere winter typically include enhanced rainfall across Indonesia and northern Australia, as well as in the Amazon Basin and in southeastern Africa and below-average rainfall across the eastern half of the equatorial Pacific and eastern equatorial Africa.

Typically, La Niña events favor increased Atlantic hurricane activity, however, Jim Laver, director of

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center says, "It is too early to say with confidence what effects this La Niña event will have on the 2006 hurricane season."

La Niña events are operationally defined using the Oceanic Niño Index (ONI), which is the three-month running-mean values of sea surface temperature departures from average in the Niño 3.4 region of the central Pacific (bounded by 5N-5S, 120-170W). NOAA defines La Niña as the condition whereby the ONI is less than or equal to -0.5°C . This definition was adopted by the U.S. and 25 other

countries in North and Central America and the Caribbean in April 2005.

La Niña events recur approximately every three to five years. The last La Niña occurred in 2000-2001 and was a relatively weak event compared to the 1998-2000 event.

NOAA will continue to monitor this event and forecast its likely impacts. The next El Niño Diagnostic Discussion will be released on February 9, 2006. Also, NOAA will release its Spring Outlook in mid March and its Atlantic and Pacific hurricane season outlooks in mid May.

Flood Safety Week: March 20-24, 2006

By Buzz Merchlewitz
Hydrologist

Flooding causes more damage in the United States than any other severe weather related event, an average of \$4.6 billion a year in the past 20 years (1984-2003). Flooding can occur in any of the 50 states or U.S. territories at anytime of the year.



In the midsouth, most flood fatalities are caused by motorists trying to drive through flooded roadways. However, this is just one of the ways floods can cause loss of life and property. The National Flood Safety Awareness Week is intended to highlight some of the many ways floods can occur, the hazards associated with floods, and what you can do to save life and property.

Each day of the week will highlight a particular flood topic:

Monday: *Advanced Hydrologic Pre-*

diction Service (AHPS)

Tuesday: *Turn Around, Don't Drown*

Wednesday: *Flooding and Related Phenomena*

Thursday: *Determining Flood Risk and Flood Insurance*

Friday: *Flood Safety*

A list of topics and in depth discussion can be found on the Flood Safety Week web site:

www.floodsafety.noaa.gov.

Additional information about Flood Safety and Preparedness can be found at www.midsouthweather.com.

Winter Arrives in the Mid South

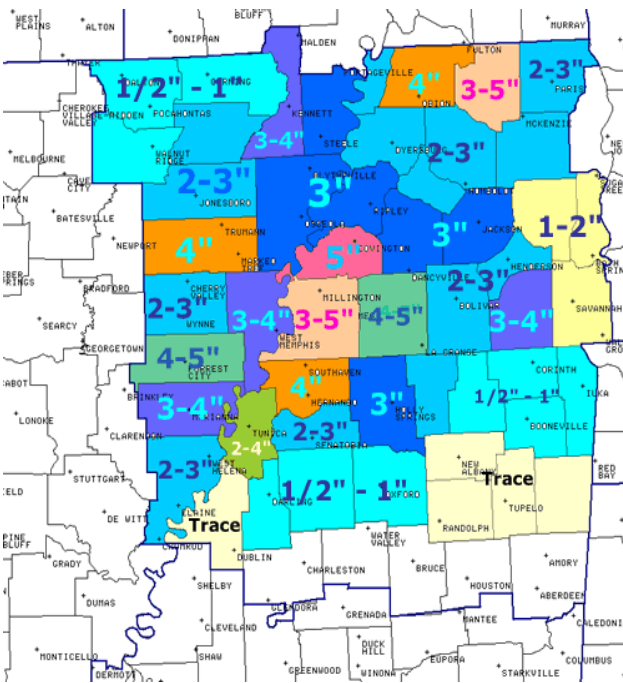
By Dan Valle
Forecaster

The morning of February 10, 2006 started off rainy, but ended snowy with significant accumulations over much of the Mid-South. A strong low pressure system moving along the Gulf Coast spread rainfall over the region during the morning hours. The key to this event was a fast moving arctic cold front that changed the rain over to snow.

The event was well forecasted by the National Weather Service. A Special

Weather Statement was issued early on the morning of the 9th addressing the possibility of significant snowfall accumulations across the region. Later that day, the weather service issued Winter Storm Watches for northeast Arkansas, the Missouri Bootheel and northwest Tennessee and conducted a conference call with local media and emergency management officials to stress the significance of this event. The weather service also created a snowfall accumula-

tions map that many of the area television stations used during their newscasts. During the evening of the 9th, a Snow Advisory was issued for east-central Arkansas and southwest Tennessee and extreme north Mississippi. Heavy Snow Warnings were issued for all of west Tennessee, northeast Arkansas, the Missouri Bootheel and extreme north Mississippi during the wee hours of the morning on the 10th. This warning was expanded further south during



the morning to include the Tunica area.

This system evolved into a huge snow maker for the northeastern U.S. New York City reported over 2 feet of snow while portions of Connecticut had 30 inches. In Memphis, this snowfall was the most significant since February 6, 2002 when 3.7 inches fell.

Left is a map of the snowfall totals along with a few pictures of the snow from Bartlett, TN, courtesy of Jason Beaman (Meteorologist with the NWS).

Long Time Employee, Virginia Johnson, Retires

By Dan Valle
Forecaster

Virginia Johnson, Administrative Assistant, at the National Weather Service is set to retire on March 31st, 2006.

Virginia has been a devoted federal employee for over 21 years. Her federal employment began in 1985 when she worked as a secretary in the Surgery Department at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Memphis. In June of 1987, she transferred to the Defense Depot in Memphis where she worked for the director of telecommunication and

information systems. In September of 1997, she transferred to the National Weather Service where she has been ever since.

Virginia says that she is looking forward to retirement. She plans on doing nothing at first, but later plans to do some volunteer work and, spend time with her grandson. She also wants to travel some and have more time for reading, quilting, knitting and crochet.



VTEC - Getting Warnings Out More Effectively

By Bob Wagner
Senior Forecaster

Users of National Weather Service Watch, Warning and Advisory Products may have noticed over the last few months that there is a new line of coding in the upper portion of our warning messages.

The line of coding looks like this:

```
/O.NEW.KMEG.SN.Y.0001.060208T1451Z-  
060208T2200Z/
```

The coding is called Valid Time Event Code or VTEC. Valid Time Event Code will enable weather providers and vendors to automate and tailor the product stream delivered to their clients and allows customers to select the specific message types they want to receive. VTEC will help improve auto-

mated dissemination of weather information to the public through a myriad of methods, such as paging systems and television message crawl systems used to relay urgent severe weather and flood information.

VTEC has been part of messages since November 1, 2005. It can be found in the following types of messages:

Severe Thunderstorm Warnings (SVR)

Tornado Warnings (TOR)

Severe Weather Statements (SVS)

Flood and Flash Flood Watches (FFA)

Non-Precipitation Watches, Warnings and Advisories (NPW)

Winter Weather Watches, Warnings and Advisories (WSW)

In the future, VTEC will also be used in flood and hydrological (river) products. Flood products from WFO Memphis will contain VTEC as soon as June 2006. Hydrological (river) products will have VTEC gradually phased in between the Fall of 2006 and Summer 2007.

For further information on the use and decoding of VTEC, visit the Web at www.nws.noaa.gov/om/vtec



NWS Wants YOU to be a SKYWARN Storm Spotter

SKYWARN is a program consisting of the National Weather's network of trained volunteer severe weather spotters. SKYWARN members consist of private citizens, amateur radio operators, firefighters, law enforcement officials, and other government officials. SKYWARN volunteers serve their local community and their country by providing the National Weather Service with timely and accurate severe weather reports. These reports, when integrated with the cutting edge National Weather Service technology and expertise, are used to issue timely and accurate warnings of impending dangerous and life threatening weather conditions. To become an elite storm spotter, you need to attend a FREE storm spotter class. Class schedules are available at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/meg/skywarncalendar.php>

Or you can call Rich Okulski at 901-544-0411

