



**NOAA, NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE, WEATHER FORECAST OFFICE**

**Miami, Florida 33165**

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*Tornado in Everglades of Collier County on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 (courtesy Dan Floyd)*

**Wednesday February 13th:  
Tornado and Thunderstorm Awareness Day**

Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms are more frequent in South Florida than most people realize. Since 1952, South Florida has averaged a total of 8 tornadoes per year. In

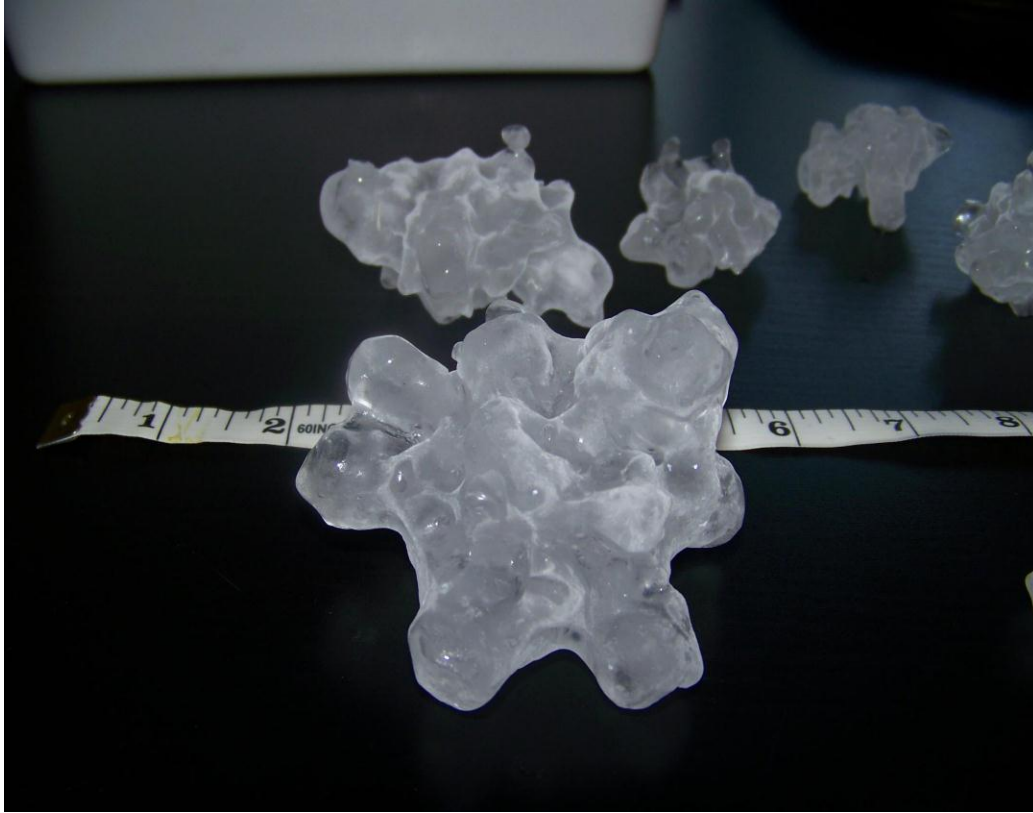
fact, since 1996 nine tornadoes of EF-1 or EF-2 intensity on the Enhanced Fujita Scale (winds greater than 85 mph) have affected south Florida. Tornadoes are also common in the outer rain bands of tropical cyclones, as was the case on June 23rd and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 when a total of 10 tornadoes were recorded over south Florida in association with the outer rain bands of Tropical Storm Debby.

2012 saw a total of 12 reported tornadoes, including the Tropical Storm Debby-related outbreak in June which was the largest tornado outbreak in south Florida since 1964. Fortunately, these tornadoes were no greater than EF-0 in intensity (winds 85 mph or less) which resulted in limited damage.

Most South Florida tornadoes, including the ones in 2012, are relatively small and short-lived. This means that it is very difficult to give plenty of advance warning. In many cases, only a few minutes of warning are given between the time a warning is issued by the National Weather Service and the tornado touchdown. Nevertheless, even a few minutes of warning can make the difference between life and death. Having a NOAA Weather Radio is a critical component of the warning system. Having a weather radio available to alert of an approaching tornado has saved lives.

**IMPORTANT TORNADO SAFETY TIP:** When a tornado warning is issued for your area, stay inside and go to an interior room without windows. In a multi-story building, go to the lowest floor.

Severe thunderstorms can also bring strong, damaging winds and large hail. During an especially stormy period in April, May and June of 2012, three thunderstorm events produced hail greater than an inch in diameter, or larger than quarters. On June 15<sup>th</sup>, two reports of hail three inches in diameter (larger than baseballs) were received from Coral Gables and rural Hendry County. Several other thunderstorms produced damaging wind gusts in excess of 60 mph. These conditions are typically localized in nature but are nevertheless dangerous to anyone outside.



*Hailstone three inches in diameter (larger than baseballs) in Coral Gables on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
(courtesy Becca Fronczak)*

The National Weather Service issues tornado and severe thunderstorm watches and warning to alert the public. Watches are issued several hours before a potential outbreak of severe weather and the general advice is to remain alert.

When a tornado or severe thunderstorm has been detected either through National Weather Service Doppler weather radar or a trained SKYWARN™ storm spotter, the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Miami will issue a warning. Warnings are communicated directly from the National Weather Service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week through NOAA All Hazards Radio, the internet at [www.weather.gov/southflorida](http://www.weather.gov/southflorida) and via local media by way of the Emergency Alert System. Tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings are normally issued within 30 minutes of an expected impact, and people are urged to take immediate protective action due to the imminent nature of the threat.