



TWISTER



SPRING 1998 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE FORECAST OFFICE LUBBOCK TEXAS

Severe Weather Season is Almost Here!



Cumulonimbus Cloud with Pileus (or Cap Cloud) developing over rising towers.

After a rather dry January and a very wet February on the South Plains, one wonders what kind of spring is in store for residents in West Texas. This "El Nino" weather pattern that we have all heard so much about in the news will definitely impact our "busy" time of the year weatherwise, but the research is unclear whether that means more or less rain later this spring, or whether it will spell a unusually high number of severe weather reports. (Continued below)

In any case, one of our jobs is to not only alert you to severe weather situations, but also to help you prepare for the upcoming inevitable spring storms. In any spring in West Texas, it's not a question of if hail, high winds, and tornadoes will happen, but when and where.

In this issue of our preparedness publication, we will give you some severe weather preparedness information, recognize the history of forecasting storms and particularly tornadoes, and provide some other information that we hope will be helpful as you get ready for springtime on the High Plains. We at the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Lubbock are committed to providing you with the best forecasts and warnings possible, and encourage you to stop by for a visit to see our facility and meet our staff. Thanks for all your help, and we hope you enjoy this newsletter

MARCH 1 -7 SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK

Texas Governor George Bush has proclaimed the week of March 1 as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Texas.

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What's In This Edition...

El Nino Update

Severe Weather Awareness Week

Don't Forget our Internet Address at:

Severe Weather Safety

50th Anniv. of Tornado Forecasting

dryline.nws.noaa.gov

Golden Anniversary of Tornado Forecasting: 50 Years of Service to the American People



Tinker Air Force Base and Norman, OK
March 23-25, 1998



On March 23-25, 1998, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service, National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL), in cooperation with the University of Oklahoma and the Air Force will host an extended celebration in Norman, Oklahoma, and at Tinker AFB (located approximately 10 miles north of Norman) as a tribute to the 50 years of tornado forecasting.

This celebration will recognize the milestones in tornado forecasting over the past half-century, including the rapid advancements in severe weather watches and warnings that have been realized during the past few years through the new WSR-88D Doppler radar and interactive computer systems. The Golden Anniversary Celebration will also highlight the exciting future which lies ahead from better scientific understanding and integration of rapidly advancing computer systems into operational meteorological forecasting.

In the evening of March 25, 1948, a tornado roared through Tinker Air Force Base (AFB), Oklahoma, causing considerable damage, a few injuries, but no fatalities. However, the destruction could have been much worse. A few hours earlier Air Force Captain Robert C. Miller and Major Ernest J. Fawbush correctly predicted that ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS were ripe for tornadoes in the vicinity of Tinker AFB. This first tornado forecast was instrumental in advancing the nation's commitment to protecting the American public and military resources from the dangers caused by natural hazards.



March 20, 1948 Damage Photos, Tinker AFB OK; Courtesy Tinker AFB History Office

MARCH 1 -7: SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK

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His proclamation reminds Texans of the destruction and loss of life that occurred last May in Bell, Travis, and Williamson Counties. He also urged government officials, the media, schools, and civic groups to disseminate awareness information.

The National Weather Service in Lubbock will release special statements regarding tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, safety tips, lightning, NOAA Weather Radio, and flash floods during Severe Weather Awareness Week.

Usually, NWS employees staff a severe weather information booth at South Plains Mall during the awareness week. We are unable to do that this year, but we do tentatively plan on staffing such a booth later in March. We'll be on hand to distribute severe weather literature, display tornado videos, and answer your weather-related questions. Come visit us!

Spotter Training is Underway across the Area

Classes have begun for Skywarn Spotter Training over our CWA (County Warning Area). As of the publication date of this newsletter, we have completed several training sessions. If you are interested in becoming a storm spotter, please contact the local agency responsible for spotting in your area. This is usually the local fire department. If you need specific information on classes, including times and dates, please see our internet home page in the "Safety Section", or call us at 745-4260.



El Nino Update



This winter has been highly variable in terms of precipitation on the South Plains. November was about average with December coming in way above average for most locations. In fact Lubbock reported about 3 times the normal precipitation for December. January was very dry, while February, as of the 24th of the month, is the 8th wettest on record in Lubbock with records going back to 1911. In Lubbock, we have received about 30 percent greater than normal precip. (about 5 1/4 inches) since October 1st. In a typical El Nino, we statistically see 2 times the normal rainfall for the period November through March, so there is time to continue to increase the surplus. Snow has been at a premium however. The forecast is for El Nino to weaken by summer, but it will still have an effect on our spring weather patterns.

The Fujita Scale



Named after the famous tornado researcher (Dr. T. Theodore Fujita), the Fujita Scale is a way to categorize tornadoes based on the amount of wind damage they produce:

- F0 -Weak tornado** (40-72 MPH); light damage
- F1 -Moderate tornado** (73-112 MPH); peels surface off roofs, mobile homes overturned
- F2 -Significant tornado** (113-157 MPH); roofs torn from houses, large trees uprooted
- F3 -Severe tornado** (158-206 MPH); some walls torn from well built houses
- F4 -Devastating tornado** (207-260 MPH); well built homes leveled, cars thrown
- F5 -Incredible tornado** (261-318 MPH); incredible damage, strong houses lifted from foundation and carried considerable distance to disintegrate



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In This Issue...

El Nino Update, Severe Weather Awareness Week,
Anniversary of Tornado Forecasting.... and more!

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 NOAA Weather Radio with battery backup power and a warning alarm
- listen to radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio for storm information

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
- abandon mobile homes (even if tied down, they offer little protection from tornadoes)

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Next issue - July '98

