

# Metro Skywarn Newsletter

Editor: Dave Johnson, NØKBD  
Spring 1994

## Class Schedule for 1994

Spring will be here soon and with it will come the tornado season. Metro Skywarn will be ready to respond to severe weather April 15 through September 30. The official tornado season runs from May 15 to September 15.

Spotters who were trained last year will not be required to train again this year. They are welcome however. Spotters trained two years ago are required to train again this year. So mark your calendars! If you didn't get a new Metro Skywarn card with this newsletter, you need to attend one of the following classes.

The following schedule is not complete. There will be several more classes scheduled in May and possibly June. Announcements will be made on the 2m swap nets regarding changes and additions to the training schedule.

Saturday, March 26, location to be announced, sponsored by TCRC and Dakota County ARES/RACES.

Tuesday, March 29, 6pm, Cottage Grove Fire Station #2, 8641 S 80 St., sponsored by SEMARC.

Wednesday, March 30, location to be announced, sponsored by TCRC and Dakota Co. ARES/RACES.

Friday, April 8, 6:30pm, Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood, sponsored by St. Paul Radio Club.

Saturday, April 9, 8am, Bloomington City Hall, Council Chambers, sponsored by Bloomington Radio Club.

Tuesday, April 12, 6:30pm, Architecture Bdg., Rm. 50, U of M, Mpls Campus sponsored by the Gopher ARC.

Thursday, April 14, 6pm, Ramsey Co. EOC, Rice and 694, sponsored by Ramsey Co. ARES/RACES.

Saturday, April 16, 8am, Bloomington City Hall, Council Chambers, sponsored by Bloomington Radio Club.

Monday April 18, 7pm, Carver Co. Courthouse, Commissioners Bd. Rm., 600-4 St. E., Chaska, Mn.

Saturday April 23, 9am, Ramsey Co. EOC, Rice and 694, sponsored by Ramsey Co. ARES/RACES.

## Metro Skywarn Moves Forward

The Metro Skywarn organization has been meeting all winter long. The full committee has been meeting monthly to update procedures, make plans for reorganizing and prepare

for the coming severe weather season. Much work has been done and much remains.

The Weather Training Subcommittee is now certified to train spotters for 3 years. They attended a 8 hour program put on by the Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management. The Procedures Subcommittee has been busy drafting this year's version of the net procedures manual. The final version will be approved by the March meeting of the Metro Skywarn Committee. A training program is in the works for net personnel. The program will feature Dave Floyd teaching radar interpretation.

The Development Subcommittee ably chaired by Bill Hughes, N0QHP, has been working on a new constitution and bylaws for Metro Skywarn. These documents will shape the future of Metro Skywarn Committee participation and operations into the twenty-first century.

The Public Information Subcommittee manned a table at Mid-Winter Madness Hamfest. The new bright orange and black Metro Skywarn badge made its debut. Two Subcommittees need new members. The Public Information Subcommittee needs people interested in fundraising, making announcements on the 2m swap nets, writing newsletter articles, and manning tables at hamfests.

The Resources Subcommittee needs technically inclined hams to find parts and equipment for the EOCs, and develop plans to put ideas into concrete form. Metro Skywarn has been offered a Doppler Radar feed by the National Weather Service for use in the EOCs. The easiest way to distribute the feed would be to put it on the local ATV repeater. We need people with that expertise to make it happen.

Whatever your interest and talents, Metro Skywarn needs your help. If you want to get more involved give Dave N0KBD a call evenings at 434-0600.

## Skywarn Q & A

by Dave McCunn NØWEG

The Metro Skywarn Public Information Subcommittee shared a table with the Red Cross at the February Mid-Winter Madness Hamfest at the Blaine Sports Center. Badges and decals were sold to raise money for a reserve fund for Metro Skywarn should current funding not be available in the future. Many Hams stopped by the table to show their interest and to ask questions about Skywarn. Since many other Hams may have the same questions we've decided to print them and hopefully we'll alleviate some confusion.

Q. What is Metro Skywarn?

A. Metro Skywarn is a group of hams, National Weather Service personnel and Emergency Management staff from local governments who are dedicated to providing timely severe weather information to the Nation Weather Service via ham radio. Skywarn organizes severe weather nets on local repeaters and trains spotters to recognize and communicate dangerous storm situations to the net operators.

Q. What do I have to do to be a participant?

A. To participate in Metro Skywarn all you have to do is to be an Amateur Radio Operator and attend a Spotter Training program this Spring and pass an easy qualification test. Then be available during severe weather, check into the nets and provide severe weather information as you are trained to do. You will be given a registration number after successful completion of a training course. If you want to be further involved such as participate in Metro Skywarn leadership or volunteer to help a working subcommittee, call Dave NOKBD at 434-0600 evenings.

Q. How long is the spotter training courses?

A. In the past they lasted 3 to 4 hours. We may be able to shorten these classes considerably this year with the better organized class materials thanks to Todd Krause of the NWS.

Q. How does this organization tie into RACES (Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service), ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) or the Red Cross?

A. Skywarn is a separate organization funded by the Bloomington RACES organization. Committee members count amongst its members representatives of almost every ARES or RACES organization in the area. Skywarn's role in emergency communications is to warn the National Weather Service of incoming severe weather situations. ARES provides "preventative" and non-governmental emergency communications for events. RACES is sponsored by a local government entity and provides emergency communications during life threatening situations as ordered by the government entity. The Red Cross manages storm related relief for disasters after they occur.

Q. How old do I have to be to be a spotter?

A. Anyone who has an Amateur Radio License to operate on 2 meters (Technician Class) is eligible to be a spotter.

Q. How often do I need to go to spotter training?

A. Every two years is required, but since memories fade when unused during our recent uneventful seasons, it is recommended that you go every year.

Q. Who teaches the classes?

A. The instructors are Amateur Radio operators certified by the State of Minnesota Office of Emergency Management and National Weather Service personnel to train spotters for three years. This year's slides and video tapes were edited and compiled by Scott Woelm, AA0BW and Todd Krause from the NWS. These videos were taken by many different people some from members of the public and some by those who make a hobby of

chasing dangerous storms throughout the tornado belt in the United States. You'll see three local hams and active Skywarn volunteers from our area in the tapes: Dave Floyd, KBOCIE, Scott Woelm, AA0BW, and Bob Adams, KC0JJ.

Q. I saw some people with orange and black Skywarn call sign badges; how do I get one?

A. Check the last page of this newsletter for an order form. The new badge and window decals and bumper stickers will be for sale at all the spotter training classes.

Q. What kind of committee work is available if I join Metro-Skywarn?

A. The Public Information Subcommittee needs volunteers to announce Skywarn classes on the nets, write newsletter articles, raise funds, and help at Hamfests. The Resources Subcommittee needs technically minded hams to help put the NWS Doppler feed on the local ATV repeater, locate electronic parts and equipment, and take operations plans and turn them into concrete projects. Anyone with any interest and talent who wants to help the Metro Skywarn Committee should call Dave N0KBD at 434-0600 evenings.

### Weather Wise

by Todd Krause (NWS)

The next time your picnic, golf game, or fishing excursion gets rained out, you'll think back to the weather forecast. Was it right, wrong, or do you even remember what the forecast was? If you think that tomorrow's prediction is occasionally suspect, just take it step further, and try to forecast the amount of severe weather over the next few months!

A few National Weather Service meteorologists make their living by forecasting trends for the upcoming 90 days by using esoteric forecast tools such as teleconnections, autocorrelations, 14 member ensembles, and so on. Much of their forecast depends on changes exhibited by the phenomenon known as El Nino.

You may remember that El Nino exists in the southern Pacific ocean, all the way from South America to Indonesia, where there is a very sparse network of weather stations! Is it any wonder that the forecast for the next 90 days might be wrong?! Throw in the caveat that El Nino does have a demonstrated effect on the weather in the southern Plains states, but scientists are hotly debating the amount of El Nino's impact for states close to the Canadian border. So what is the point of all this? The truth is that we cannot say how active our thunderstorm season will be.

Remember 1992? That was the year El Nino strengthened considerably and Chandler was struck with a devastating tornado. Many other areas were also hit by other tornadoes. In fact, there were 29 tornadoes in Minnesota on that June 16, a record number of twisters in one day for Gopher-land. But the rest of 1992 was really quite tranquil.

So even if El Nino produces long stretches of quiet weather in Minnesota this year, there is still the possibility of some extremely severe weather on a few days. Or there could be

many days of severe weather this summer, since El Nino appears to be waning. We just cannot say for sure, so we'll let the soothsayers check out various tree rings, or gaze into all sorts of crystal balls.

Fortunately, when it comes to the short-term forecast for the next 24 hours, our forecasts have improved to about 90% accuracy. We trust this translates to several hours of pre-storm awareness, so that you can be alert to the eventual development of thunderstorms later in the day. Maybe it will even prevent your next barbecue from getting rained out! But that's probably asking too much. As the commercial said: "It's not nice to fool Mother Nature."

If you were to look at a map of the paths of tornadoes over the last 30 years, there would seem there is a hint of a local "tornado alley" across the western and northern sections of the Twin Cities, from Carver County to Ramsey and southern Anoka counties. But Dakota and Washington counties have certainly had their share of tornadoes as well. Only Scott county seems to have escaped, having had only two tornadoes since 1950, but both were long-tracked and damaging!

The National Weather Service is grateful to every spotter around the Twin Cities, and all of you are performing a vital public service. Thanks everyone!