



# Metro Skywarn



**Editor: Dave Johnson, N0KBD**

**Spring 2001**

Can you help Metro Skywarn save the cost of mailing and receive your Newsletter in an Acrobat .pdf file via email or the web? Email Dave at [n0kbd@arrl.net](mailto:n0kbd@arrl.net) and state your preference, via email or the web. Thanks for making Metro Skywarn a success!

## FROM THE CHAIR

Donn Baker, WA2VOI

*Well, its time to get started again! 2001 Training starts in early March with classes running into June this year. The complete schedule is in this newsletter, and also on the Skywarn Central web page (<http://www.skywarn.ampr.org>). Any changes, if necessary, will be posted to the web page. Please remember that if you did not recertify in 2000, you MUST Recertify this year!*

*In 2000, we trained approximately 350 Spotters; about 2/3 of which were recertifications. We expect to do the same this year. Although the last several seasons have been fairly quiet, we cannot count on a quiet 2001 storm season! Please try to get your training in early... it may be an "interesting" storm season!*

*At the December Board of Director's meeting, we elected a new Board member, and some new officers. Curt Peterson was elected to the Board, taking the seat left vacant by the resignation of Lynn DeLong. Curt is our Training Coordinator, and has done a great job getting classes lined up for 2001. John Kelly, Doug Reed, and Paul Emeott were all reelected for another term. Donn Baker was elected Chairman of the Board, and Doug Reed elected Vice-Chairman. Please remember that Board meetings are always open to any Skywarn members who wish to attend. They are (usually) the 1st Monday of the month, except July, 7-9PM. November meeting is a dinner meeting... no business! The location moves between the three EOC sites and the Chanhassen NWS office. The 2001 Board of Director's meeting schedule is listed elsewhere in this newsletter. Check with any member of the Board for last minute changes.*

*As of the first of the year, we have someone to do public-*

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**Remember: Spotting mobile at night can be dangerous. Please spot from home at night.**

## METRO SKYWARN 2001 CLASS SCHEDULE

March 3 Sat. 9am - 1pm  
Twin Cities Repeater Club  
Burnsville City Hall  
Civic Center Dr. and Nicollet Ave.  
Steve Filek 651-460-2937  
[sfilek@isd.net](mailto:sfilek@isd.net)

March 10 Sat Noon - 4PM  
Anoka Cty Amateur & ESC  
Blaine City Hall Community Room  
9150 Central Avenue, N.E. Blaine  
Cordell, Bob W 651-784-7090  
[kb0gip@juno.com](mailto:kb0gip@juno.com)

March 17, Sat. 8am to 12 pm  
Twin Cities FM Club  
Golden Valley Public Safety Center  
Golden Valley Rd east of Winnetka  
Allen, Gale R. 952-941-5264  
[gallen@ee.umn.edu](mailto:gallen@ee.umn.edu)

March 19, Mon. 6pm to 10 pm  
Radio City  
2663 County Road I  
At Jct US 10 & Co Rd I (Behind BK)  
Mounds View  
Fish, Dan 763-786-4475

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## How to Reach Us

- \* By snail mail: Metro Skywarn, Inc. 2014 Radatz Ave. St. Paul, MN 55109
- \* By phone: Donn at 612-781-1359
- \* By email: [skywarn@skywarn.ampr.org](mailto:skywarn@skywarn.ampr.org)
- \* On the World Wide Web: The Metro Skywarn Homepage, URL= <http://www.skywarn.ampr.org>
- \* The Board always needs more help. Anyone wishing to participate in Board activities is invited to attend the meetings held the first Monday of each month.

## POSITIONS AVAILABLE:

**Media Interview Volunteers** Metro SKYWARN has created and will soon be implementing an ambitious public relations program to help spread the word about SKYWARN. The end result will hopefully be increased media coverage. We have already been approached by one of the local TV stations that is interested in sending a camera crew along with a spotter (or spotter team) during severe weather this spring. We expect to receive additional requests from other stations in town. In order to fulfill any requests for on-camera interviews, I will need to maintain a list of spotters who are comfortable being on TV and who can act as a spokesperson on our behalf. (Really, you just need to be yourself!) I will work with interested spotters to prep them on what key messages we would like communicated to the public about SKYWARN. If you are interested in being considered for television interviews, please contact me via email. Thank you! - Lara Rodriguez, Metro SKYWARN Public Relations Director, [rissy@primenet.com](mailto:rissy@primenet.com)

**Net Operators** Metro Skywarn is looking for weather wise Amateur Radio Operators in the Mpls/St.Paul area to take a major role in Skywarn Nets. The Emergency Operation Center at the National Weather Service Field Office in Chanhassen is looking for Amateur Radio Operators and a limited number of weather wise non-radio operators with flexible hours to work during severe weather events in Central East Central Minnesota and Western Wisconsin. Contact John Kelly at 952-944-3572 or [n0tgy@aol.com](mailto:n0tgy@aol.com).

The Emergency Operations Center at the Golden Valley Public Safety Building, sponsored by the Twin Cities FM Club is looking for Amateur Radio Operators and a limited number of weather wise non-radio operators with flexible hours to work during severe weather events in the Metro Area. Contact Larry Schenck KBØPYK at 612-287-9952 or [kb0pyk@arrl.net](mailto:kb0pyk@arrl.net).

**Training Assistants** (Certified Instructor Designees) - responsible for assisting Certified Instructors with setting up for scheduled classes, with administrative paper work, with making announcements and introductions at classes, with some minimal instructing, with grading tests, and with packing up after classes. Persons selected in this category for 2001 and 2002 will be given priority consideration to fill vacancies as Certified Instructors and will receive advanced training in February 2003. Time commitment estimated at 5 hours per class March to June. If interested, contact Dave Johnson 612-782-8950 or email: [n0kbd@arrl.net](mailto:n0kbd@arrl.net).

**Assistant Webmaster(s)** - Under supervision of the Webmaster, monitor, maintain and update "Skywarn Central" ([www.skywarn.ampr.org](http://www.skywarn.ampr.org)). Preference given to experience with Website operations, design and setup. Direction and training available, if needed. If interested, contact Dave Johnson NØKBD, 612-782-8950 or email at [n0kbd@arrl.net](mailto:n0kbd@arrl.net).

Also:

**Funding/Development Director**

**Newsletter Reporters**

**Newsletter Printing/Publishing Coordinators**

To apply, please contact Dave Johnson NØKBD, 612-782-8950 or email at [n0kbd@arrl.net](mailto:n0kbd@arrl.net).

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*ity and Public Relations for MetroSkywarn: Lara Rodriguez, WXØGRL. (Great callsign!!) Lara will be working to get MetroSkywarn's presence and message out to the general public a bit more than it is now. Lara can be reached via email at: [rissy@primenet.com](mailto:rissy@primenet.com)].*

*One big change that the Board is working on for 2001 concerns this newsletter. The handwriting has been on the wall for some time that costs for mailing the Newsletter are prohibitive given our income. Even with NWS help in printing the Newsletter, and volunteers doing the work, it still costs about \$400 to produce and mail each issue. That cost for a year, combined with the costs associated with classes, is simply more than we have available. So, we are trying to get things set up so that the newsletter will be published on the web, via the Skywarn Central webpage. Arrangements can also be made for a "plain-text" email copy if you would prefer. A limited number of paper copies will be made of each issue, and can be mailed if needed. (A donation to offset both the newsletter costs and general expenses would be greatly appreciated. MetroSkywarn is a 501 (c) (3) corporation, and donations are fully tax deductible!)*

*We'll try to get the Spring newsletter printed each year. It's a valuable tool for class planning, and general publicity for the Skywarn program. The Summer and Fall issues, however, will be electronic, as outlined.*

*Lastly, I'd like to put in a word about spotting and safety. We've had a couple of really quiet seasons. No complaints, but it may have taken some of the 'edge' off our skills. PLEASE remember that your safety is the most important thing. Leave yourself two escape routes. Don't drive across flooded streets and roads. Don't stand under the only tree. Watch behind you.*

*Donn Baker WA2VOI*

### **SKYWARN UPDATE STARTS A NEW SEASON WITH A NEW MODERATOR FEB 17 9PM**

Skywarn and Emergency Communications Update is a radio show airing most Saturday nights at around 2100 central time after the transmission of the taped and satellite amateur radio news programs. This show is part of Saturday Ham Talk which starts at 1900 hours local central time ( 7:00 p.m.). Saturday ham talk program is aired on the 145.21,444.000,145.450 repeaters in the twin cities metro area.

Skywarn and Emergency Communications Update is a live interactive and educational program for severe weather spotters and emergency communicators in and around the twin cities metro area . The program includes news, commentary, questions (sometimes answers) and announcements. Spotter training opportunities in Minnesota and western Wisconsin are announced. Discussions about weather and disaster occurrences with guests from responding agencies ( NWS, salvation army, red cross, Dept of Emergency Management radio group and others are featured. You are all invited to participate.

Joe Chesney kcØgyj  
[kc0gyj@arrl.net](mailto:kc0gyj@arrl.net)

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[radiocty@skypoint.com](mailto:radiocty@skypoint.com)

March 28, Wed. 6 pm to 10 pm  
SMARTS  
Carver County Govmt Center,  
600 4th Street East, Chaska, MN  
Anderson, Dean 952-466-3808

March 29, Thur 6 pm to 10 pm  
Ramsey Cty Emerg. Services  
3383 North Rice Street Shoreview  
SW Corner Rice & I694  
Hughes, Bill 651-482-5238  
[n0qhp@amsat.org](mailto:n0qhp@amsat.org)

March 31, Sat. 8am-12noon  
Bloomington Em. Com.-  
Blmgtm City Hall  
2215 W. Old Shakopee Road  
Bloomington  
Nagle, Tim 952-881-4648  
[tenagle@uswest.net](mailto:tenagle@uswest.net)

April 2, Monday 6 to 10 PM  
ARES Chisago County  
St. Bridigets Church  
Hwy 8 in Lindstrom, 55045, MN.  
Mr. Ed LaPlante (651-257-1313)  
[KC0ASX@aol.com](mailto:KC0ASX@aol.com)

April 4, Wed 2-Mtgs @ 1-5 & 6-10 pm  
Forest Lake Public Safety Dept  
210 North Lake Street Forest Lake  
Forest Lk City Hall; Council Chambers  
Schwartz, David 651-464-5877  
401@flpd.com

April 4, Wed 6 pm to 10 pm  
SEMARC  
Fire Station 2,  
8641 80th Ave  
Cottage Grove  
Harrell, David 651-610-0087  
[semarcmn@aol.com](mailto:semarcmn@aol.com)

April 7, Sat. 8 am - 12 noon  
St Paul Radio Club & Red Cross  
St Paul Red Cross  
176 So. Robert Street  
St. Paul  
Dallas Fogg (Class Host), 651-644-2361  
Dale Maroushek (Club President), 651-777-5309

April 14, Sat Noon to 4 PM  
Anoka Cty Amateur & ESC  
Blaine City Hall Community Room  
9150 Central Avenue, N.E. Blaine  
Cordell, Bob W 651-784-7090  
[kb0gip@juno.com](mailto:kb0gip@juno.com)

April 14, Sat. 8:30 am to 12:30

North Hennepin Community College  
Center for Training and Development  
CCE Bldg 7411 85th Av N Brkn Pk  
Intended for the general public  
\$10 fee/ Pre-registration Required  
Ambrose, Christine 763-424-0880  
[cambrose@nh.cc.mn.us](mailto:cambrose@nh.cc.mn.us)

April 16, Mon. 6 pm to 10 pm  
Radio City  
2663 County Road I  
At Jct US 10 & Co Rd I (Behind BK)  
Mounds View  
Fish, Dan 763-786-4475  
[radiocty@skypoint.com](mailto:radiocty@skypoint.com)

April 17, Tue 6 - 10 pm  
Gopher Amateur Radio Club  
Univ of Minn East Bank Campus  
Building and Room to be announced  
Hammock, James D. 612-625-7844  
[w0yc@arrrl.net](mailto:w0yc@arrrl.net)

April 21, Sat. 8 am to 12 pm  
Stillwater Amat. Radio Assoc.  
Washinton Cty Govt Center,  
West Enterance  
14949 62nd Street No.  
Glas, David A. 651-436-3334  
[daglas@uswest.net](mailto:daglas@uswest.net)

April 25, Wed 6 - 10 pm  
Robbinsdale Radio Club  
Robbinsdale Public Safety Center  
4101 Hubbard Avenue Crystal  
Powers, Frank 763-535-3559

April 26, Thur 6pm - 10pm  
Amateur Radio Post 676  
Courage Center in Ed-center Rm1  
Golden Valley Rd, take Duluth Exit  
Hammock, James D 612-520-0515  
[ki0dn@arrrl.net](mailto:ki0dn@arrrl.net)

April 26, Thur 6 pm to 10 pm  
Ramsey Cty Emerg. Services  
3383 North Rice Street Shoreview  
SW Corner Rice & I694  
Hughes, Bill 651-482-5238  
[n0qhp@amsat.org](mailto:n0qhp@amsat.org)

May 5, Sat. 8 am to 12 pm  
SEMARC  
Fire Station 2  
8641 80th Ave  
Cottage Grove  
Harrell, David 651-610-0087  
[semarcmn@aol.com](mailto:semarcmn@aol.com)

May 23, Wed 6 pm to 10 pm  
Ramsey Cty Emerg. Services

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**3383 North Rice Street Shoreview**  
**SW Corner Rice & I694**  
**Hughes, Bill 651-482-5238**  
[n0qhp@amsat.org](mailto:n0qhp@amsat.org)

**June 2, Sat. 8:30 am to 12:30 pm**  
**North Hennepin Community College**  
**Center for Training and Development**  
**CCE Bldg 7411 85th Av N Brkn Pk**  
**Intended for the general public**  
**\$10 fee/ Pre-registration Required**  
**Ambrose, Christine 763-424-0880**  
[cambrose@nh.cc.mn.us](mailto:cambrose@nh.cc.mn.us)

## Severe Weather Safety

Its kind of early to be thinking about severe weather, but I was watching Almanac (a production of Twin Cities Public Television) on TPT last Friday and got my thinking realigned. Bruce Watson, the Meteorologist who specializes in long term forecasting in the upper Midwest (see his web site at: <http://members.aol.com/LkSperior> ) thinks that since Winter has been starting up earlier, Spring should be too.

As soon as people start talking about Spring I start thinking about floods and severe weather. So let's review some of the severe storm basics. Are you ready for spotter duty this year? Is your training up to date? We ask you to come back at least every 2 years. Your welcome to come too training every year or more if you like.

Do you spot from your vehicle? How is the old beast running? Do you need to invest in some plugs or a new battery? Check your windshield wipers and lights. How about your tires? Good tires are essential to safe driving in stormy weather.

Have you checked the SWR on your mobile radio antenna? Checked the power output of your radio and made sure the receiver actually receives more than just the 1 kilowatt repeater down the block? Use a handheld or carry one for a backup? Batteries hold a charge? Did you know that rubber duck antennas can break too?

How about the folks back home? Do they know what to do when the weather radio goes off? No weather radio. Well maybe this is the year to get one. Already have a Weather radio. Does it work? How about a home safety plan? The American Red Cross and FEMA have some good information about that look at the FEMA web site <http://www.fema.gov/library/lib07.htm> .

What about rover or fluffy? If your house is damaged by a storm and they get loose will the animal control people be able to bring them back? Maybe you should ask your Vet about installing a "chip" in your furry companion. Check out <http://www.akc.org/love/car/index.cfm> for more information.

Building a home? Remodeling check with your local Emer-  
**Metro Skywarn**

gency Management Director about what you can do to make your family and belongings safer from severe storms. You can improve the ability of your home to withstand high winds by a significant amount by making sure that the roof is strongly attached to the walls and that the walls are strongly attached to the foundation. Consider a safe room see <http://www.fema.gov/mit/tsfs01.htm> for more information about that.

How can I help my community? Well to begin with being prepared and actively participating in the SKYWARN program go quite a ways towards helping your community. Consider other things as well. The Salvation Army and the Red Cross are always looking for people to help out in emergencies. Hams are especially welcome. This way you can help with out investing a lot of time in the highly technical training your police, fire or emergency medical people have to go through and you will be just as appreciated.

Check to see if there is a local ARES or RACES organization you can hook up with. Want a little more action there are emergency management and police reserve organization who could use your help.

How about signing up with the organization who runs a duty EOC for Metro SKYWARN? The membership requirements vary so I won't go into them here.

Enough rambling for now. I want too sum this up by saying "Take a little time here and there to PREPARE" or as Ben Franklin would have said it "A stitch in time saves nine".

Bill Hughes NØQHP

## Real Time Radar Data Now Available

Prior to January 1 2001, "free" radar imagery on the World Wide Web was available only as delayed products of about 20-45 minutes. As most of you know, this data was available from a variety of sources such as Intellicast, Kavouras/DTN etc. There were 4 vendors that had contracts from the NWS to gather radar data. These contracts expired on Jan 1, 2001.

A couple of months prior to the contract expiration, the NWS was testing a central collection and distribution system to deliver the radar data. The installation of the new AWIPS workstations were completed throughout the NWS by late summer and radar data is now flowing on the AWIPS WAN (wide area network). The testing was a success and radar data is now available directly from the NWS in near real time. There may be some delay at times, depending on the network and server integrity.

Keep in mind that under "clear air" or surveillance mode, images are available every 10 minutes. The meteorologists will keep the radar in this mode under certain snow situations to get a little more resolution to the snow intensity.

In "storm mode" images are available every 5 or 6 minutes.

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*Dee Chandler, WX4DC, a spotter for Alabama SKYWARN, saw the F4 tornado that ravaged parts of Tuscaloosa on December 16, 2000. He has graciously agreed to share the story of his experiences that day. Metro SKYWARN believes this is a great example of how dedicated and well-trained volunteers can make a difference during a severe weather emergency. This is an abbreviated version of his story. The full version is posted at [www.skywarn.ampr.org](http://www.skywarn.ampr.org)*

## SKYWARN, Amateur Radio and the Tuscaloosa Tornado

*By Dee Chandler, WX4DC*

That Saturday in mid-December started like any other, except on this particular day it was unusually warm. Actually, it was almost eerie outside. Something was definitely “in the air.” As a result, all spotters had been contacted by email and were put on alert by local emergency management officials.

We are fortunate here in Tuscaloosa. We have hams in strategic positions of authority in the city. We have two licensed hams at Emergency Management (they got the city to upgrade our repeater), a police department captain and dispatch, and also about 75 percent of the meteorologists in the area. We have a small low-power television station locally, but we get coverage from the larger TV stations in Birmingham as well. Because watches and warnings are now issued from radar images, we had a two-county early warning and continuous television coverage of the storm on four channels. All were warning of a tornado signature on radar.

Prior to the warning being issued for our area, our net manager was already positioning ham spotters to the north and south of the projected path. Our local television stations have that great future which projects a path and arrival time using the names of the smallest communities. EOC monitors both the National Weather Service and key TV coverage. This information was fed to spotters in the field.

We had several teams on both sides of the storm so that if a twister did touch down, we could assist from both directions. We did not want to be in the projected path. We wanted to be off to the side to observe.

When I could first discern rotation—that is very important—I informed net control that I had a visual. It evolved into a massive tornado I was approximately 7 miles from the F4 at the closest point and I could identify debris. I later learned it was the mobile home park I was seeing in the funnel.

I kept a visual on the funnel for 3 to 4 minutes until my location was enveloped in the rain curtain. At that time I went mobile. But let me clarify ... I went mobile, informing net control that I was headed out to locate damaged areas. I WAS NOT CHASING THE TORNADO. I find this to be a very dangerous practice.

After briefly checking damaged areas to be sure they all were reported, I then returned to work and sat and reflected on what had happened with my boss and fellow employees. It was time to begin to rebuild. That story is still being written. As for me, every morning I have to drive through the area at Interstate 59 where the tornado

turned that 20 degrees. I always give a sigh of thanks.

We had over 300 homes demolished and only 11 deaths. People were informed. It makes the difference.

Links:

<http://www.alert-alabama.org/audio.html>

(audio clips of the Skywarn net)

<http://www.kr4tz.org/al-arri/article.php3?ID=20001218.001>

(a news release from the Tuscaloosa net control)

<http://www.abc3340.com/weather/Dec2000Tornadoes.html>

(local TV coverage of the tornado)

## 24-Hour Weather Radar Now Available

For a number a years now, TPT (Twin Cities Public Television), has been broadcasting MnDOT supported weather radar on KTCI-TV, Channel 17. This is an especially valuable tool for Metro Skywarn spotters and net controls when it was broadcasting. Herein lies the problem, this service was only available during on “non-regular programming” times and usually NOT available during severe weather events.

With the advent of digital television broadcasting, TPT now is broadcasting weather radar 24hrs a day, seven days a week on KTCI-DT, channel 16. The name of this service is “TPT WX.” This service is in addition to the four other services, namely TPT Kids, TPT Xtra, TPT You, TPT 2D. The new video compression technology allows broadcasters to “squeeze” more programming into spectrum that, in the past analog world, only allowed one. If you can directly receive Channel 16, you can watch real time 24X7 statewide and metro weather radar and other weather information via your TV. This is identical to the Channel 17 service.

To receive TPT Wx, you will need a digital tuner/receiver. The two cheapest units available today are the RCA model DT100 set top box or the Haupaugge WinDTV PC card which fits within a personal computer. The typical costs are near \$ 400 - 450

and \$ 300 - 350 respectively. Best Buy and similar stores as well as Internet online purchasing services usually stock them. There are many more tuner/receiver units coming on the market everyday and prices are expected to drop.

TPT is working with cable television to see if they can past public digital television along to their subscribers via new digital set top boxes. It is expected that Time Warner will be offering this shortly. No time frame yet for AT&T Broadband.

Don Heppelmann  
NØJOO

## SKYWARN Group Call Pager Suppliers

MinnComm 520-8122 Ask for Barb  
PAGE NET 884-4400

They program the group code into the pager you may have to take the pager in or order a replacement if this is not a new account. Most Customer service reps should be aware of this.

Regardless of what kind of service you purchase this is an numeric only group call. We use codes to facilitate communications. The codes are:

Code	Explanation
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162550	NOAA Weather Radio alarm. An auto dialer attached to a weather radio trips when ever KEC 65 sends out the alert tone for the Metro Area. (Note this is the single tone not the EAS / SAME Codes this dialer reacts to.) Turn on your WX Radio or dial up the frequency to hear what is going on. You should receive this code every first Wednesday of the month at about 1300 hours and for watches and warnings.
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999	Formal Net up.
333	Training net.
111	Nets in standby
000	Nets shut down.

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There are 4 products available: 1) Base Reflectivity, which is what you normally see on most displays and is detecting the intensity and "ground level". 2) Composite Reflectivity, which detects the highest reflectivity at ANY level in the scan. This product is helpful for detecting high reflectivity cores aloft, which MAY indicate a developing severe thunderstorm. 3) 1 hour rainfall estimate. 4) Storm total rainfall estimate.

Here are the main web sites for the radar data.

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/radar/latest/DS.p19r0/si.kmpx.shtml>

This is the direct site for Chanhassen.

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/radar/> This is the U.S. map with all the sites.

You can move around in different directions from each site and run loops, etc. Finally, for those of you interested in looking and some archived radar images, take a look at the following site.

[http://www.rap.ucar.edu/staff/pneilley/NIDS\\_archives.html](http://www.rap.ucar.edu/staff/pneilley/NIDS_archives.html)

Jim Richardson WMØX

Meteorologist, National Weather Service

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*Address Correction Requested*