

NWS Taunton, MA. SKYWARN Newsletter #248

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SKYWARN Activation Report for the 1/14/08 Nor'easter..

SKYWARN was activated on Monday January 14th for a nor'easter. An article was submitted to the ARRL and the report, which appeared in the February ARES E-Letter is listed below:

+ New England Nor'easter ARES/RACES/SKYWARN Response

January 14, 2008 -- A Nor'easter prompted an activation of ARES/RACES/SKYWARN groups across New England as the storm brought a heavy wet snow to the region causing damage to trees and power lines particularly in portions of Massachusetts, Northern Connecticut, and Northwest Rhode Island. The National Weather Service (NWS) Taunton, Massachusetts Amateur Radio station, WX1BOX, NWS Gray, Maine station WX1GYX, and the Massachusetts State EOC and Region 1 Headquarters covering northeast Massachusetts were active.

SKYWARN nets were activated to report snowfall and storm related damage. Ray Weber, KA1JJM, and Eric Tuller, N1QKO, from Western Massachusetts SKYWARN were active gathering reports, with the hardest hit areas being in the Springfield area.

Rob Macedo, KD1CY, Eastern Massachusetts SEC and ARES SKYWARN Coordinator for NWS Taunton, said "At the height of the storm, over 9,000 homes in the area lost power." The Mount Tom, 146.94 MHz repeater was used.

In northern Connecticut, Roger Jeanfaivre, K1PAI, Hartford-Tolland County SKYWARN Coordinator relayed reports from the 146.79 MHz Vernon repeater, sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Radio Association (PVRA). The KB1AEV Connecticut linked repeater system was also used.

In Rhode Island, ARES activated their snow desk providing reports on road conditions and snowfall reports and SKYWARN there also monitored the situation. John Buco, N1EGS, from Rhode Island SKYWARN, reported significant tree and power line damage. Rhode Island EMA Coordinator and ARES SEC Rick Andreano, K3OQH, and SKYWARN Coordinator Martin Mendelson, closely monitored the situation.

The New England EchoLink/IRLP Reflector gateway system was active on Echolink conference *NEW-ENG* Node: 9123/IRLP 9123. This served as an interoperability hub between the Massachusetts State EOC, the Massachusetts Region 1 Headquarters, NWS Taunton, Massachusetts and NWS Gray, Maine. Snowfall and damage reports were received from over 20 connections that were attached to the system.

In Central and Eastern Massachusetts, North Shore SKYWARN was active on the NSRA 145.47 MHz Danvers repeater with SKYWARN monitoring in Central Massachusetts on the 146.97 MHz Paxton repeater. The 146.895 MHz Walpole repeater operated under emergency power. "We had numerous trees and wires down with the weight of the snow," said Roger Turner, W1ZSA, Walpole EMA Director and Norfolk County SKYWARN Coordinator.

Tom Kinahan, N1CPE, Massachusetts State RACES Radio Officer, relayed a report from Public Information Officer Peter Judge at Massachusetts Emergency Management HQ in Framingham that at the height of the storm 45,000 people were without power in the state. Kinahan did a shift at the State EOC and staffed the State EOC with ham operators starting at midnight Monday and securing at 4 PM Monday afternoon. -- Rob Macedo, KD1CY, Eastern Massachusetts SEC and ARES SKYWARN Coordinator for NWS Taunton, Massachusetts

SKYWARN Activation Report for 2/1/08 Ice Storm/Wind/Minor Flood Event..

SKYWARN was activated formally on February 1st, 2008 as icing conditions along with minor wind damage and flooding affected portions of Southern New England. WX1BOX was activated by Carl Aveni-N1FY and Rob Macedo-KD1CY.

Ice storm conditions occurred across portions of Northern Connecticut and Western and Central Massachusetts particularly at the higher elevations. Icing reports of 1/4-1/2" were common in Montgomery, Hardwick, New Braintree, Princeton, Sterling, and Spencer, Massachusetts. Damage in the area communities, however, were spotty. Frequencies

monitored for SKYWARN included the 146.94-Mount Tom, 146.985-Greenfield and the 146.97-Paxton Repeaters. In addition, the New England EchoLink/IRLP VoIP Reflector System was utilized and monitored. Ray Weber-KA1JJM provided reports from Western Massachusetts SKYWARN.

Roger Jeanfaivre-K1PAI had the Hartford-Tolland County Connecticut SKYWARN Net active on the 146.790-Vernon, CT Repeater for call-ups as required. Icing in the higher elevations reached 1/4-1/3" with some isolated large limb damage in Tolland, CT. Also, minor street flooding was reported in several communities in both Northwest Connecticut and Southwest Massachusetts with rainfall amounts of 1.5-2.5" over this area as the ice changed to rain.

In Southern New Hampshire, icing was reported via the N1IMO linked repeater system with 1/2" icing reported in Peterborough, NH and Jaffrey, New Hampshire. No damage was that reported from the icing.

As conditions warmed and heavier precipitation moved into Rhode Island and Southeast Massachusetts moved towards flooding, strong winds and thunderstorm activity. In Boston, Massachusetts, Talbot Avenue from Bernard to Norwell Streets was closed due to flooding. As we moved towards late evening, thunderstorms formed producing ground strikes of lightning that resulted in a structure being hit by lightning on Montgomery Street in Haverhill, Massachusetts with thunderstorms reported in Lincoln, RI, New Bedford, Massachusetts, Coventry RI and the Brockton, Mass. area. Minor street flooding covered both lanes of Route 3 near Exit 8. N1XRS-Tony, reported that his weather station had a measured wind gust around 1115 PM of a 53 MPH measured wind gust in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts with urban flooding with 2 feet of water reported on Purchase and Sawyer streets with both streets closed due to flooding.

The activation was secured on 1230 AM Saturday February 2nd, 2008. Special thanks to all those that assisted in this SKYWARN Activation.

SKYWARN Amateur Radio Spotter Dave McCracken-WA1WVV Passed Away..

Earlier in February, the sad news was received that Dave McCracken-WA1WVV passed away shortly before Christmas. Dave had a long illness yet provided a number of key SKYWARN weather related damage and meteorological reports over the past several years. Dave will definitely be missed and Edie McCracken-K1EKO, Dave's mother, passed this information on to me.

New Bedford RACES Radio Officer, Chuck Pelletier-KD1DA Passed Away..

New Bedford RACES Radio Officer and longtime volunteer of the city

of New Bedford Emergency Management Agency, Chuck Pelletier-KD1DA passed away after a long illness. Chuck participated in many of the RACES Nets held monthly for the city of New Bedford, provided SKYWARN reports to the National Weather Service when available and supported the New Bedford Emergency Management Agency for many years. Chuck was also a longtime member of the Southeast Massachusetts Amateur Radio Association (SEMARA) Club. More information on Chuck's passing can be seen at the SEMARA web site. See link below:

<http://www.semara.org/>

New National Hurricane Center Director Named and is an Amateur Radio Operator..

NOAA and the National Hurricane Center/Tropical Prediction Center named a new director, veteran meteorologist Bill Read. Bill Read is also an Amateur Radio Operator. The announcements can be seen at the following link:

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20080125_read.html

The ARRL Letter had an "In Brief" article about Bill Read being an Amateur Radio Operator and this was also on the ARRL web site. See the "In Brief" article from the ARRL web listed below:

* Radio Amateur Named Head of Tropical Prediction Center: Veteran meteorologist Bill Read, KB5FYA, was named the new director of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Tropical Prediction Center, which includes the National Hurricane Center (NHC) earlier this month. Read had served as the Center's acting deputy director since August 2007. The NHC has a dedicated amateur station on-site -- W4EHW -- and has worked closely with hams for decades. In announcing Read's appointment to head the Center, NOAA Administrator Conrad Lautenbacher cited Read's three decades of experience with the agency and of his reputation as "a trusted consultant to emergency managers" in the Houston area. NOAA's Tropical Prediction Center contains three divisions: The National Hurricane Center -- provides forecasts of the movement and strength of tropical weather systems and issues watches and warnings for the US and surrounding areas; The Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch -- issues year-round marine forecasts and warnings over the tropical and subtropical North Atlantic and eastern Pacific, produces tropical cyclone position and intensity estimates and provides operational support during landfalling hurricane and tropical storm events; The Technical Support Branch -- provides support for the Center's computer and communications systems, developing new techniques for tropical cyclone and tropical weather analysis and prediction.

ARRL Letter Article: Wisconsin ARES Members Activated to Assist with Tornado Aftermath..

The following ARRL Letter article discusses Wisconsin ARES reaction to a tornado in early January 2008.

==> WISCONSIN ARES MEMBERS ACTIVATED TO ASSIST WITH TORNADO AFTERMATH

A rare January EF3 tornado in Wisconsin destroyed houses and knocked out power shortly after 4 PM (local time) Monday, January 7, displacing about 160 people. The Red Cross activated members of the Kenosha County and Racine County Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) groups to provide logistical communications at the two relief shelters in Kenosha County, as well as from a communications station at the Kenosha County Emergency Operation Center. Riding along with Red Cross teams, ARES members helped relay damage assessments back to the Red Cross building in Racine.

"Providing communications is essential," said Assistant Emergency Coordinator for the Racine County ARES Alex Voss, N9RGX. "We set up a communications network at the Red Cross building in Racine, outside of the affected area. We were ready to go when activated. I couldn't be more proud of our volunteers. We will work with the responding agencies as long as they need us. We'll take what we've learned this time and use it to improve our response in the future."

According to ARRL Wisconsin Section Emergency Coordinator William M. Niemuth, KB9ENO, Wheatland, Somers and the city of Kenosha were hardest hit by the storm. "In Wheatland, 20 homes were destroyed and at least 50 homes had some kind of damage. In Kenosha, six homes were destroyed and almost 30 were damaged. There were a handful of homes in other parts of the county with minor damage." An unknown number of cars were blown off the road on Highway 50 near Highway O, said Sgt Gil Benn of the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department.

"It was a severe storm with a lot of damage," Kenosha County Sheriff David Beth said. "In all my time here, I have never, ever, seen any damage to this degree. This is something I've only seen on TV that happens in other places, but during the middle of January this is something absolutely incredible that happened for us." Until the storms on Monday, there has been only one tornado in January since 1844, according to data from the National Weather Service.

Twelve people were treated at area hospitals for storm-related injuries, but none of the injuries was major. There were no fatalities.

The tornado disrupted legal proceedings as at least 300 people evacuated to a courthouse basement as a precaution. A Kenosha County Circuit judge who was presiding over opening testimony in a high-profile murder trial said he couldn't believe it when the deputy told him that he and the 50 or so people in the courtroom had to be evacuated because of a tornado warning. He said he wasn't scared. "It's a first," he said while waiting in the basement. "I've actually had...warnings occur during jury trials before and frankly I just ignored them, but not in January."

Niemuth thanked the 18 ARES and RACES members who responded. "I bet this morning that [the 18 responders] never thought they would be responding to help their community recover from an EF3 tornado by evening! But, the reality is emergency and disaster situations most always catch us by surprise. That is why we train and prepare."

Sherriff Beth concurred: "It was heart-wrenching to see how most of these people are volunteers...and they just strap on their clothes, they leave their loved ones at home and they go running to help others. Usually we're used to an incident that happens here in one spot, and this happened over miles. This happened from southwestern Wisconsin all the way over to Kenosha and everybody did their job. Everybody did what they had to do." -- Some information provided by Racine County Emergency Coordinator Jim Markstrom, KB9MMA; Racine County Assistant Emergency Coordinator Alexander Voss, N9RGX; ARRL Wisconsin Section Emergency Coordinator William M. Niemuth, KB9ENO; David Voss, WB9USI, and KenoshaNews.com.

ARES E-Letter Article: Tornado Outbreak in the Missouri Ozarks..

The following is an ARES E-Letter Article from February 2008 on the Tornado Outbreak that affected the Missouri Ozarks in early January.

+ Tornado Outbreak Response in the Ozarks

SKYWARN operators tracked the largest outbreak of tornados ever experienced during the month of January in Missouri. Long-range forecast models had identified the weather pattern ten days ahead of the outbreak, which occurred January 7-8. Broadcasts of the hazardous weather outlook were made on NOAA weather radio, the Southwest Missouri Regional SKYWARN repeater NONWS on 145.49 MHz, and other local SKYWARN repeaters throughout the National Weather Service (Springfield, Missouri office) warning area. ARES groups, emergency managers and SKYWARN spotter groups were well prepared.

At 1:55 PM on January 7, the first tornado watch was issued and immediately transmitted on the N0NWS repeater, with the regional SKYWARN network placed in standby mode by NCS Jim Sellars, N0UAM. Bill Davis, KC0KQT, Meteorologist-in-Charge in Springfield, operated the N0NWS amateur station located at the NWS office and monitored emergency traffic and severe weather reports.

By 5 PM, tornado warnings were in effect for several counties in the Missouri Ozarks and the full 37 county regional SKYWARN network was active. James Vroman, AC0BN, reported a tornado on the ground just southwest of Monett, Missouri, to the NWS via the 146.97 MHz Ozarks ARS club SKYWARN repeater. The EF-2 tornado struck a mobile home park there. Amateurs passed ground truths to the NWS, confirming what the RADAR operator saw. The NWS was able to provide increased warning times for people living along storm tracks. Scott Hilmes, KC0WTL, was also intercepting the storms along with professional storm chaser Randy Hicks, providing reports on wall clouds, funnels and tornadoes in the Lawrence, Christian and Greene county areas to the NWS.

Randy Atkinson, KC0IQM, Terry Shoemaker, KE4LQW, and Christian County ARES EC/Deputy Regional SKYWARN Coordinator Pat Conway, WA6JGM, acted as net controls on the 145.23 MHz Highlandville ARES repeater in Christian County. They coordinated the efforts of 30 mobile intercept spotters as they tracked the repetitive storms crossing their area through the early evening.

Greene County ARES/RACES EC Ken Baremore, W0KRB, monitored numerous repeaters and assisted the Red Cross and the Greene County EOC with staffing and response.

After 6 PM, super cell thunderstorms were producing tornadoes in Lawrence, Greene and Webster counties simultaneously. Numerous mobile intercept and fixed SKYWARN spotters provided ground truth reports of wall clouds, funnels and at least 10 confirmed tornadoes in these counties.

Mobile operators Jeff Johnson, K0NI, Ian Horton, KB0UTW, Doug Schumpert, K0DPS, and Bob Hessee, N0XJJ, intercepted an EF-3 tornado northeast of Springfield and reported on it until it was near Conway in Webster County where they were blocked by a poor highway network. They stopped and rendered aid along the damage path in the Strafford and Marshfield areas until other first responders arrived on the scene. John Jackson, WA0DFE, repeatedly crossed the tornado path relaying critical information to the Greene County EC, NWS and emergency responders. At the same time, mobile intercept and fixed

spotters were reporting damages in southwest Greene County while continuing to track the super cells crossing the area, reporting wall clouds, funnels, baseball size hail and dangerous winds of more than 70 miles per hour.

By 7 PM, Steve Palmer, KA0SPM, activated the damage assessment and information net on the 146.91 MHz W0EBE repeater and began relaying storm damage reports to the NWS and helping pre-stage spotters across the rest of the region.

After a tornado would rip through an area, Amateur Radio mobile reports became damage reports as the hams metamorphosed from storm spotters to first responders. The Springfield NWS office itself became a target of two tornadoes, forcing meteorologists and liaison Rod Kittleman, K0ADI, to take cover in the NWS tornado bunker and relinquishing forecasting and warning responsibilities to the National Weather Forecasting office in Paducah, Kentucky.

At 7:50 PM, the Storm Prediction Center issued tornado watch #5, with the designation of "This is a particularly dangerous situation," meaning that long track, strong to violent tornadoes were expected. By 8 PM, severe storms were moving northeast on a line from extreme southwest Missouri into central Missouri along the Interstate 44 corridor. These storms were "training," which means one storm was following another. McDonald County, Missouri, was under 6 to 8 separate tornado warnings within an eight-hour period.

The regional SKYWARN net remained active until the threat of severe weather no longer existed, coinciding with the Tornado Watch expiration at 5 AM, Tuesday morning. Three people were killed and about 20 were injured during this tornado outbreak. Multiple repeater systems were used and hundreds of Amateur Radio emergency responders contributed thousands of man-hours to enhance the safety of the citizens of southwest Missouri and Kansas. -- Rod Kittleman, K0ADI, Southwest Missouri ARRL PIO

ARRL Letter "In Brief" Article: Amateurs Activated as Tornado Strikes Mississippi Town..

The following ARRL Letter "In Brief" Article talks about Amateurs Activated as a Tornado strikes a Mississippi town.

* Amateurs Activated as Tornado Strikes Mississippi Town: On the afternoon of January 10, an EF3 tornado hit Caledonia, Mississippi, approximately 60 miles southeast of Tupelo. The tornado caused major

damage to the town of 1000 people; an elementary school gymnasium was severely damaged. The Lowndes County Emergency Operations Center activated area storm spotters in advance of the approaching storm; hams assigned to the EOC activated the Amateur Radio station there and started to gather information on the weather. After the storm passed, EOC personnel requested assistance from radio operators to help with reports of major damage to homes and buildings in the town. The EOC set up a command post at the fire station downtown and asked members of ARES to provide communication between the EOC and Red Cross; the Red Cross had set up a shelter at a local church not too far from the affected area, and local amateurs set up portable lights and generators. Hams maintained communication until 7 PM local time. Members of the Monroe County Amateur Radio Club set up their repeater for a secondary emergency contact frequency in Monroe County; Lowndes County is just south of Monroe County. -- Information provided by Doug Scallions, KD5FUO, ARRL Emergency Coordinator for Lowndes County

ARRL Letter Article: Amateurs Lend a Hand as Deadly Storms Sweep Across Southern United States..

The following is an ARRL Letter article on the deadly storms that hit the region on Tuesday February 5th, 2008.

==> AMATEURS LEND A HAND AS DEADLY STORMS SWEEP ACROSS SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

At least 54 people were killed and hundreds injured Tuesday and Wednesday by dozens of tornadoes that plowed across Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama in the nation's deadliest barrage of twisters in almost 23 years. In spite of the disasters, state and local emergency management officials once again discovered that they could call on Amateur Radio operators to help out and get communications up and going again after the infrastructure failed.

According to ARRL Southeastern Division Director Greg Sarratt, W4OZK, "Four people were killed in Alabama as the storms damaged homes, caused flooding and downed trees and power lines. North Alabama SKYWARN, ARES and scores of Amateur Radio operators were up all night long, providing vital communications to the National Weather Service and Emergency Management Agencies all across the region. Once again, Amateur Radio operators played a critical role before, during and after the storms. I am proud of the level of professionalism and critical information that these operators provided our served agencies."

Hundreds of houses were damaged or destroyed across the region. Authorities had no immediate cost estimate of the damage. The storms flattened entire streets, smashed warehouses and sent tractor-trailers flying. Houses were reduced to splintered piles of lumber. Some looked like life-size dollhouses, their walls sheared away. Crews going door-to-door to search for bodies had to contend with downed power lines, snapped trees and flipped-over cars. Near hard-hit Lafayette, Tennessee, cattle wandered through the debris. At least 12 people died in and around the town; more than 30 were killed in Tennessee alone.

"It looks like the Lord took a Brillo pad and scrubbed the ground," Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen said as he surveyed the damage from a helicopter. "I don't think that I have seen, since I've been governor, a tornado where the combination of the intensity of it and the length of the track was as large as this one," he said. "That track had to be 25 miles long. [The twister] didn't skip like a lot of them do...It's just 25 miles of a tornado sitting on the ground."

Most communities had ample warning that the storms were coming. Forecasters had warned for days that severe weather was possible. The National Weather Service issued more than 1000 tornado warnings from 3 PM Tuesday-6 AM Wednesday in the 11-state area where the weather was heading. The conditions for bad weather had lined up so perfectly that the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma put out an alert six days in advance.

Tennessee Section Emergency Coordinator Lowell Bennington, WD4DJW, said that approximately 25 hams in Madison County had participated in SKYWARN activities before the storm arrived; one ham actually spotted the twister. "Two hams reported to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency-West, assisting in passing radio communication. A couple of hams assisted Madison County EMA in setting up their Mobile Command Post. On Wednesday, 10 teams were dispatched to do Damage Assessment. These teams were composed of three individuals, one of whom was an Amateur Radio operator," he said.

Bennington said that hams in Middle Tennessee "utilized our vast networks of linked 2 meter repeater systems as well as our UHF-linked system in support of the National Weather Service, Tennessee Emergency Management, law enforcement agencies and participating local EMA offices. Operators from Wilson County were dispatched to the Nashville NWS office and they operated from there until around 3:30 AM Thursday, giving and taking weather reports."

Alabama ARES District 6 Emergency Coordinator Doug Hilton, WD0UG, said his area was hit hard by a fast-moving line of severe weather; District 6 covers the northern counties of Alabama. Hilton contacted the NWS office in Huntsville early Wednesday regarding possible SKYWARN activation. "After discussing the situation with NWS personnel, it was decided that since this was going to be a long event, that would probably last all night, it was best not to tie up the local repeaters early on. I opened an informal SKYWARN net to get weather information out to the amateur community during the afternoon, and several Madison County hams participated in the net. We closed the net after about an hour and re-opened it that evening at 7," he said. Madison County ARES was activated that evening and other hams in the area joined in. Hilton said Northern Alabama has a linked-repeater system that covers all 10 counties during emergency conditions.

The storm churned into Western Alabama from Mississippi about 9 PM. The main part of the storm started its destruction at 3 AM. Hilton said, "The storm was a killer, and the extra lead time that people got from the great staff at NWS probably led to a reduction in casualties. A massive long-track EF-3 tornado hit Lawrence County and caused 3 fatalities and more than 20 people were injured." Hilton said the NWS estimated the twister to be 1/2 mile wide with a path length of 18.7 miles, causing "extreme destruction of property." An EF-4 tornado with peak winds of 180 MPH went through Jackson County, causing one fatality.

Hilton said hams were able to provide many timely situation reports, "and 'ground truth' is always the best indicator of reality. Many of the hams who stayed up all night were also prepared to leave their homes at a moment's notice to go anywhere in the District, if needed. The incredible teamwork of this ARES/SKYWARN team and the level of professionalism was something to behold."

Chris Shaw, W4BGN, Kentucky District Emergency Coordinator, said several confirmed tornadoes touched down throughout his state. "Kentucky hams activated weather nets, while others were out and about spotting for severe weather. Allen and Monroe Counties in South Central Kentucky were especially hard hit. Some repeaters lost power and hams quickly adapted, going to emergency simplex frequencies on 2 meters. The communications went very smooth and seemed to be beneficial to many. Hams worked throughout the night to help provide communications, especially to those areas without power."

President Bush gave assurances that his administration stood ready to help. Teams from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) were

sent to the region and activated an emergency center in Georgia, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said Wednesday. "We're going to keep watching this."

"Loss of life, loss of property -- prayers can help and so can the government," Bush said. "I do want the people in those states to know the American people are standing with them." On Wednesday, Bush called the governors of the affected states to offer help and to tell them that "the American people hold those who suffered up in prayer."

While the weather was unusually severe, winter tornadoes are not uncommon. The peak tornado season is late winter through midsummer, but the storms can happen at any time of the year with the right conditions. "All the clues were there. It was just unfortunate that it came out the way it did," prediction center director Joseph Schaefer said. Greg Carbin, warning coordination meteorologist at the Oklahoma center, said there were 67 eyewitness accounts of tornadoes, but some of those were probably twisters that were counted more than once; the actual number is probably more like 30 or 40, he said.

As more ARES groups relay information to ARRL, we will update these reports on the ARRL Web site. -- Some information provided by The Weather Channel

ARRL Letter Article: Florida Hams Help Out When NWS Goes Dark

The following ARRL Letter Article talks about Florida Hams Assisting when NWS Goes Dark after a phone outage.

==> FLORIDA HAMS HELP OUT WHEN NWS GOES DARK

On Tuesday, February 12, a tornado touched down in Cocoa Beach, Florida. Unfortunately, National Weather Service (NWS) alerts failed due to problems with phone circuits. Dennis Decker, Warning Coordinator Meteorologist with the NWS in Melbourne, said two of their four transmission lines went down that afternoon around 3:30, but were back up five hours later. Messages are carried to towers via telephone, he said.

"That's a big issue when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather alerting radio is not working," said Brevard County Emergency Management Director Bob Lay. The county went into backup mode, using the volunteer emergency alert system. The NWS activated Amateur Radio operators to help get the word out about the tornado warning. "We have ham operators to tell us when they see something," Decker said.

Dan Fisher, AI4GK, of Palm Bay, Florida, said he tried to tune into a weather frequency on his radio, but said, "I couldn't pick up anything. The [station out of] Melbourne has a loud hum on it and nothing else."

Fisher and Emergency Coordinator for the Platinum Coast Amateur Radio Society John Weatherly, AB4ET, said the group participated in an emergency drill just last week that involved a tornado scenario. "We're there when we're needed," Weatherly said. "We give the meteorologists a warm and fuzzy feeling of what is really happening."

Although Tuesday's storms were dwarfed by the massive 2005 hurricanes, transmitters were rendered useless in both situations. Dave Jacobs, Data Acquisitions Property Manager at the NWS office in Melbourne, said that when problems do occur, it is usually something to do with the telephone lines. "It's our Achilles' heel," he said. Jacobs oversees the radio system for Melbourne, checking its transmitters three times daily to ensure they are working.

Weather Service officials in Melbourne know the alert announcing the first tornado watch at 2:25 PM went out across the radio system. At 3 PM, when another weather alert went out, officials determined they had a problem with the Melbourne and Orlando transmitters. Jacobs said he had just listened as the computer system read the entire message in the Melbourne office, a stage in the alert process that occurs before the message reaches phone lines. He then received a telephone call from a county official saying only half of the second weather alert was broadcast. -- Information provided by Floridatoday.com

That's all for this edition of the SKYWARN Newsletter!

Respectfully Submitted,

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