

From: SkyWarn Announcement List ()
To: Skywarn-list@oak.powersrvcs.net
Date: Sun, March 29, 2009 12:03:47 AM
Subject: SKYWARN Newsletter #258

Hello to all..

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Newsletter Issued: 3/29/09.

WX1BOX Web Site and Twitter Now Functional..

Twitter has now been embedded into the NWS Taunton Web page at

<http://www.wx1box.org>

This was done in the last couple of weeks after the March 14th, 2008 SKYWARN Strategy Meeting. The Twitter program and work with the web site is a work in progress. Further updates on the usage of Twitter and its usage on the WX1BOX web site will follow in later SKYWARN Newsletters. Meantime, please feel free to follow WX1BOX on Twitter and look for updates on its usage.

NWS Taunton SKYWARN Training 2009 Update..

SKYWARN Training sessions in Northwest Franklin County Massachusetts as well as Northeast Connecticut are being worked on and it is hoped to have these sessions confirmed in the next week or two. Additional forecaster driven sessions in Northwest Hillsborough County NH, Providence Rhode Island and Southeast Worcester County along with Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard will be worked on once the Franklin County and Northeast Connecticut sessions are confirmed. Amateur Radio taught classes will also be worked once the remaining forecaster driven sessions are confirmed. As new sessions are posted, the SKYWARN Training Schedule on the NWS Taunton and WX1BOX web sites will be updated and the new training schedule will be posted via the SKYWARN Newsletter. The NWS Taunton SKYWARN Training Schedule can be seen at the following links:

<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/box/skywarnTraining.shtml>

<http://www.wx1box.org/node/36>

NWS Taunton March 14th 2008 SKYWARN Strategy Meeting Summary..

There were 22 attendees at the March 14th, 2009 NWS Taunton SKYWARN Strategy Meeting. They were as follows:

N1PJ-PJ Howe Worcester County SKYWARN Coordinator
W1ZSA-Roger Turner Norfolk County SKYWARN and Walpole EMA Director
K1HRV-Dave Doe Norfolk County SKYWARN & Walpole Deputy Director
KB1KQW-Jim Palmer North Shore Assistant SKYWARN Coordinator
KA1NCF-Eric Horwitz North Shore ARES District Emergency Coordinator
N1FY-Carl Aveni Assistant NWS Taunton ARES SKYWARN Coordinator
KA1JJM-Ray Weber Western Massachusetts SKYWARN Coordinator
KB1QQR-Paul Taschereau Connecticut SKYWARN Operator
N1QKO-Eric Tuller Western Massachusetts Assistant SKYWARN Coordinator
K1SJW-Steve Williams Connecticut State SKYWARN Coordinator
N1CPE-Tom Kinahan Massachusetts State RACES Radio Officer
KA1RSY-Ed Caron Acushnet EMA Communications/NWS Taunton Operator
KB1DGY-Bernie Dubb Windham County SKYWARN Coordinator
WD4JZO-Jim Blaine Hillsborough County ARES Emergency Coordinator
N1XTB-Phil McNamara South Shore ARES District Emergency Coordinator
W1MPN-Mike Neilsen Eastern Massachusetts ARRL Section Manager
N1XRS-Tony Duarte Acushnet EMA Operations Manager
KB1G-Bill Boyes Rhode Island SKYWARN Net Control
KB1CYO-Phil McLaughlin NWS Taunton SKYWARN Operator
KD1CY-Rob Macedo ARES SKYWARN Coordinator for NWS Taunton
KB1GHX-Glenn Field NWS Taunton Warning Coordination Meteorologist
William Babcock NWS Taunton SKYWARN Program Leader

The first item was a SKYWARN Presentation on the events from November 2008-March 2009. There were 22 SKYWARN Activations between November 2008 and March 2009 with the majority of the formal activations with operations at NWS Taunton in the mid-November through January timeframe. Activations became more self-activation oriented between February and March as the pace of significant storms slowed. Beyond the ice storm, the December 19th, 21st and 31st storms were among the more significant storms as well as the March 2nd storm where Southern New England narrowly missed a more significant gravity wave event that affected the Mid-Atlantic more severely.

The presentation then went into plans for VoIP Hurricane Net Improvements for 2009. The three areas of focus will be recruitment of Hams, stations and contacts in the affected area of hurricanes, net control recruitment/training and a web-based net control scheduler system.

The presentation moved to an in-depth discussion on the ice storm. The presentation was adapted from presentations given during the VoIP Hurricane Prep Net for March 2009 and was also given at the Cape Ann Amateur Radio Association Emergency Communication Meeting. The presentation on the ice storm for the VoIP Hurricane Prep Net for March 2009 is available at the following link:

<http://www.voipwx.net/node/242>

A video of the ice storm was shown after the presentation. This video is available online via the following link:

<http://www.nsradio.org/video/features/icestorm08/>

With the presentation completed, the next topic discussed was SKYWARN Training sessions. These updates and the SKYWARN Training schedule have been provided in this current newsletter and the previous SKYWARN Newsletter so this part of the discussion will not be repeated in the meeting summary.

The SKYWARN Online class has been completed and worked into the Articulate software but it was discovered that when they put it into place, the software was 5 versions out of date. NWS now has the updated Articulate software and once the software is installed they will integrate the previous training work into the new software package. The online class will remain available only to people that have been to a live class the first time and there would be a login required using the person's existing spotter # and last name.

For the online classes, there was a discussion about whether quizzes should be part of the online class. Bill Babcock noted that at a prior weather office, the SKYWARN community was quite concerned about quizzes in the online class. The Coordinators recommended that quizzes would be OK provided the system allows review of the material and retakes of the quiz as many times as needed for passing with 70 or above being a passing grade. If the quizzes were an issue, retraining live would still be an option. It is noted that once the online classes are available, retraining of every 5 years to maintain SKYWARN status would be required.

The next item discussed was updates on NWS Taunton Ham Operations. The Icom IC-2720 radio that Carl Aveni-N1FY had donated to NWS Taunton is now installed due to a microphone issue with the Kenwood radio. The goal will be to get a new microphone for the Kenwood radio and get an adapter to allow that radio to be utilized on Packet Radio. This will be done in the next few weeks. Issues with the 6-Meter Radio as well as installing the Icom IC-735 HF radio are under review.

Twitter was demonstrated by Tony Duate-N1XRS showing that interface on the town of Acushnet Emergency Management Agency web page. He showed how this was utilized to type short text messages that will display on the web site and how it was even utilized to interface with wx-msg client. It also has its own email address that could be utilized and the twitter info can be followed if people have twitter accounts and then they can get messages issued from the WX1BOX twitter account. Twitter is now running on the WX1BOX web site and more work and experimentation will be done with it over the next few months.

The next item discussed was the 'new' internal NWS chat program. It currently has a number issues from a security/login perspective and it also is a resource drain on the limited NWS staff that is in place in Northeast US NWS offices. The Taunton, Albany, Brookhaven and Gray offices have all opted out of the program currently as it is optional but it may eventually become required. It is noted that Glenn Field is on the Uniformity of Services team for NWS office and this item among other NWS services are under review from a uniformity of services perspective. This also includes the hail criteria change and experimentation of moving to a 1' hail

threshold

that some offices in Central Region are currently experimenting on doing in their area.

The next item discussed was SKYWARN Modernization. Bill Babcock is on the SKYWARN modernization team and the SKYWARN Spotter pamphlet was modernized along with consolidating the SKYWARN Basic and Advanced Spotter guides into one complete guide. It was expected to come out this year but all the satellite and radar imagery, which is great for Power Point presentations, will not work well with the new combined guide that has the later imagery per the government printing office so it has been stalled. Based on Bill Babcock's participation in the SKYWARN modernization team, the SKYWARN modernization is focused only on these areas.

The next item discussed was being able to find a clearinghouse for storm related pictures. Facebook, Flickr and other options are under consideration. This will be reviewed further and announced to SKYWARN Spotters once a decision has been made. PJ-N1PJ, Ray-KA1JJM, Bill-KB1G, Phil-N1XTB and Eric-KA1NCF will review what can be done in this area. It is noted that for the NWS Albany office, they have an email address for both storm pictures and storm reports. It was also discussed that Amateur Radio Operator review of webform data for spring/summer related weather events should be done to allow for comprehensive summer severe weather reporting. In the Winter, the webform reports are monitored much more closely by forecasters.

The next item discussed was the CoCoRAHS program. This program has caused some confusion for the SKYWARN community as to its purpose. The purpose of CoCoRAHS is to be a Cooperative Observer type program and is not intended to replace any existing program, particularly the SKYWARN program but the explanation of what CoCoRAHS is versus SKYWARN has not been well communicated which has led to questions and concerns from SKYWARN Spotters. A Frequently Asked Question document detailing the differences and how SKYWARN Spotters could help CoCoRAHS and how CoCoRAHS can help SKYWARN will be posted in the next SKYWARN Newsletter.

The next item was a presentation from Mike Neilsen-W1MPN on how hurricanes form, the track of hurricanes and how SKYWARN Coordinators can stay informed and know when to expect a tropical storm/remnant type system versus a potential hurricane. Mike reviewed the upper air patterns required for a New England hurricane and the upper air patterns required for formation of a hurricane along with sea surface temperatures and the differences between a hurricane, hybrid system and cold-core Nor'easter type systems. Mike also explained Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE) index as well as other parameters and hurricane climatology for the region. The presentation was well received by the coordinating team.

The next item discussed was the Southern New England Weather Conference. It will be held Saturday October 24th, 2009 at the Dexter-Southfield School in Brookline, Massachusetts. Below is a preliminary agenda for the meeting:

- Peter Boyer from the Canadian Hurricane Center (Hurricanes Juan and Kyle Presentation)
- Julio Ripoll-WD4R, WX4NHC Assistant NHC on WX4NHC Operations
- NWS Gray Maine Forecasters and Mish Michaels on the NH Tornado
- Kerry Emanuel from MIT presenting the Pro-Global Warming side
- Presentation on the Waterspouts from the 2008 Severe Weather Season
- Presentation on High School/College Career Meteorology
- Rick Curtis - Southwest Airlines - Aviation Meteorology
- Ice Storm Presentation by Joe Dellicarpini and Bob Kearns)
- TV Meteorologist Panel Discussion
- 10th Anniversary of Storm of Millennium Parody (New Parody if planning allows)
- No dinner like last year. Conference should finish by 6 PM.

The next item discussed was Storm Ready. Working with AA1TI-Rick Cantin, the town of Mansfield is close to Storm Ready. They are looking at putting in a staff gauge for the Rumford River, which can potentially flood. Rick is working with their local DPW to get the gauge installed. The city of Boston is Storm Ready but waiting on a ceremony until the winter has passed. An action was taken to setup a meeting of those interested in supporting more Storm Ready communities in the region.

The P3 Hurricane Hunter Aircraft will be going to Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. NWS Taunton was going to participate but given it is not truly in their County Warning Area, the local office will not be participating. The next time NWS Taunton will get the P3 Hurricane Hunter Plane will be in 2011.

An online version of the Prevailing Winds SKYWARN Newsletter was discussed and it will be done after the spotter retraining mailing is done and the online SKYWARN class system is online and working. Glenn Field mentioned that they are working on 2 teams to support the SKYWARN program over time. One team would handle SKYWARN Training sessions and talks working with Amateur Radio Coordinator instructors while the other team would handle internal things such as a newsletter, database entry and web updates for the NWS web site SKYWARN section. Glenn Field then proceeded with a 20 minute presentation on humorous typos in NWS products and how it important it is to not make those typos as folks are reading the products. After this presentation, the SKYWARN meeting for March was completed. The next meeting will be in November on a date to be determined.

NWS Gray Maine SKYWARN Operations and Training Update..

NWS Gray Maine SKYWARN Operations continues to move along with SKYWARN and the Ham Radio Station at WX1GYX active for several winter storms including the December ice storm with a greater extent of reporting noted in these events. The program was also active in the late February storm which was a heavy wet snow storm that also caused tree and power line damage in their region.

A SKYWARN Meeting for Coordinators was held at National Weather Gray, Maine

on March 15th. SKYWARN Training sessions have been confirmed with additional sites in the planning stages. The NWS Gray Maine forecasters are also assessing how much involvement SKYWARN will have in the P3-Hurricane Hunter Plane visit to Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. For more information on NWS Gray Maine SKYWARN Training sessions and WX1GYX operations, please see the following links:

<http://www.wx1gyx.org/>
http://www.erh.noaa.gov/gyx/spotters_skywarn/index.shtml
http://www.erh.noaa.gov/gyx/spotters_skywarn/skywarn2.shtml

NOAA/National Hurricane Center States 2008 Hurricane Season Sets Records..

NOAA/National Hurricane Center states that the 2008 Hurricane Season Sets records and some of the information on the records set and a summary of the 2008 season can be seen at the following links:

Article Summarizing the 2008 Atlantic Hurricane Season:
http://www.noaaneews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20081126_hurricaneseason.html

2008 Atlantic Hurricane Season Tropical Cyclone Reports:
<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/2008atlan.shtml>

2008 Atlantic Hurricane Season Tropical Weather Summary from the National Hurricane Center:
http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/archive/2008/tws/MIATWSAT_nov.shtml

NOAA Announces Test of Atlantic/Gulf Tsunami Warning and Response..

The following announcement concerns NOAA Announcing a test of the Atlantic/Gulf Tsunami Warning and Response system. See announcement below:

NOAA - Emergency Managers to Test Atlantic/Gulf Tsunami Warning and Response First Coordinated Drill for Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Locations

Residents and visitors along the Atlantic coasts of the United States and Canada, the Gulf of Mexico, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands should not be alarmed when they hear tsunami test messages broadcast over their televisions and radios on Thursday, April 2, 2009. That day, at 9:00 a.m. EDT (8:00 a.m. CDT), officials will test the region's communication and response plans to help communities prepare for a tsunami.

Co-sponsored by NOAA and the U.S. National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, this is the first region-wide tsunami warning test to include the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts of the United States, Canadian Atlantic Provinces, and the U.S. Caribbean Territories and Commonwealths.

NOAA's Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer, Alaska, will commence the exercise by issuing a test bulletin through tsunami warning communication channels. The test bulletin, clearly marked "test message", will prompt local officials to implement their tsunami response plans.

During this exercise, some communities in Puerto Rico will conduct evacuation drills while participating emergency management agencies on the U.S. East and Gulf coasts will conduct preparedness activities, such as workshops and table-top exercises. Upon completion of the exercise, participants will evaluate the effectiveness of their tsunami preparedness plans and make adjustments as necessary.

The United States expanded its tsunami warning system and preparedness activities in 2005 after a devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean struck the coasts of several countries including Sumatra, Indonesia, with little or no warning, killing nearly 230,000 people. The Indian Ocean region was considered to have a relatively low risk for a destructive tsunami.

"The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami raised awareness about the urgent need to be prepared," said Jack Hayes, director of NOAA's National Weather Service. "This important exercise will test the Tsunami Warning System to identify operational strengths and weaknesses in each community that takes part."

The exercise will increase tsunami preparedness and improve coordination throughout the regions. Coastal residents and visitors are encouraged to prepare their personal tsunami plans prior to this exercise and locate their community's tsunami evacuation routes. The exercise will be cancelled if a real tsunami threat occurs within 24 hours of the test.

NOAA observes, understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>

On the Web:

West Coast/Alaska Tsunami Warning Center: <http://wcatwc.arh.noaa.gov>

Pacific Tsunami Warning Center: <http://www.prh.noaa.gov/ptwc>

NOAA Tsunami Program: <http://www.tsunami.gov>

National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program: <http://nthmp.tsunami.gov>

ARRL Letter Article: North Dakota Hams Help to Head Off River Flooding..

The following ARRL Letter Article is on North Dakota Hams helping to head off

River Flooding on the Red River. The ARRL web story with pictures can be seen at the following link:

<http://www.arrl.org/news/stories/2009/03/27/10730/?nc=1>

ARRL Letter Article below:

==> NORTH DAKOTA HAMS HELP TO HEAD OFF RIVER FLOODING

Early on Friday, March 27, the Red River -- the natural boundary separating North Dakota and Minnesota -- rose to 40.32 feet, more than 22 feet above flood stage and inches more than the previous high water mark of 40.10 feet set April 7, 1897. According to Mark Johnson, KCOSHM, President of the Red River Radio Amateurs (RRRA) <<http://www.rrra.org/>>, hams are "substantially involved" with the flood operations. "This flooding event is impacting residents in both North Dakota and Minnesota" he told the ARRL. "National Weather Service forecasters are predicting that the river will crest to 41 feet, maybe even as high as 43 feet, by Saturday."

Johnson said that on March 22, officials in North Dakota's Cass County and Minnesota's Clay County requested the assistance of local amateurs. Hams set up local nets on the W0ILO repeater system, using 444.875+ and 145.350-. "Initially, hams supported the area, helping out with coordinating food and water requests for the Salvation Army and Red Cross," he said. "In addition, Clay County hams have been heavily involved with coordinating sand and sandbag logistics."

In Fargo, schools were closed and trials in the municipal court were suspended. According to "The New York Times," hundreds of people swarmed onto the floor of the Fargodome, home of the North Dakota State University football team and where a rodeo had been scheduled for this week. In the center of the stadium, the "Times" reported that "mountains of clay- and rock-filled sand were surrounded by college students, children, members of the National Guard and ordinary residents, all bearing shovels and filling white sandbags. Thousands of volunteers -- from places as far as Florida and Alaska -- have filled 2.5 million sandbags in just five days. Little forklifts whirred around bearing pallets of bags and dump trucks drove through delivering more sand, even as volunteers offered 'fresh hot cookies,' neck massages and tetanus shots" <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/27/us/27flood.html?_r=1&ref=us>.

Johnson said that as the river continues to rise and sandbagging operations near completion, "ham activity is morphing from dike preparations to developing emergency communications for evacuations, in the event should that become necessary. As of Thursday, March 26, we are currently communicating between three hospitals, two county Emergency Operation Centers, volunteer centers, the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, the Coast Guard and a helipad." Johnson said these are 24 hour operations.

"Honestly, I do not know the number of hams participating; I would estimate roughly 30 or more at this time to support the operations," Johnson told the ARRL. "The volunteer response has been enormous -- we believe we have enough volunteers on hand to manage through the weekend. After the weekend, we are relying on other area hams who have responded to the call that are standing by." Since all resource needs are being met by amateurs in the North Dakota and Minnesota Sections, ARRL

Emergency Preparedness and Response Manager Dennis Dura, K2DCD, said that there is no need for Amateur Radio assistance from other Sections at this time.

Cass County Sherriff Paul Laney told the "Times" that south of the city -- near the Red River and the Wild Rice River -- 46 residents and 12 pets had to be rescued by boat from homes in which water had pressed through sandbags and made its way into first floors, and that on Thursday, he and his officers were headed off on boats to make 11 additional rescues.

Concerns about major flooding extend well beyond Fargo. Throughout parts of North Dakota and western Minnesota, residents are bracing for the Red River, nearby streams and rivers and the Missouri River to spill their banks -- the result, according to the NWS, of a combination of factors. In the fall, the flat terrain was saturated by rain, followed by a winter of heavy snow, and now -- as so much snow began melting -- came days more of rain and, on Wednesday, half a foot of snow in some places.

In the Canadian province of Manitoba, the Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization and the City of Winnipeg Emergency Program have requested assistance from local ARES groups there to help out with the flooding on that side of the border, said Radio Amateurs of Canada's Manitoba Section Emergency Coordinator Don Gerrard, VE4DWG. "Both organizations are in the process of activating their Emergency Operations Centers and have requested ARES radio operators to begin staffing the radio room at the facilities beginning Monday March 30, 2009," he posted on an RAC ARES reflector. "Jeff Dovyak, VE4MBQ, District Emergency Coordinator of the Capital Region, advises that he is beginning the process of scheduling ARES radio operators for these current taskings. Further requirements are likely as water levels rise, and will be communicated when received."

"As both a ham and a resident of Fargo, I am deeply touched by the community outpouring of support for fellow man," Johnson said. "Volunteers by the thousands have poured into churches to help with food, volunteer centers to help fill sand bags and to the front lines for sand bag placement. Everyone pray for us -- we need a miracle for the community as a whole to pull this off."

ARRL Letter Article: Hurricane Watch Net Looking for Net Control Operators..

The following ARRL Letter Article is on the Hurricane Watch Net looking for Net Control Operators.

==> HURRICANE WATCH NET SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

With hurricane season approaching, the various organizations that assist the National Hurricane Center (NHC) <<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>> in Miami are gearing up for what could be a very active storm season. One organization that assists the NHC is the Hurricane Watch Net (HWN)

<<http://www.hwn.org/>>. To better assist the NHC, HWN Manager Dave Lefavour, W7GOX, told the ARRL that the HWN is looking for new members. "The Hurricane Watch Net relies on volunteer operators -- our members -- who serve as our net control stations," he said. "HWN members are hams who have above-average stations, are capable of effectively conducting HF net operations and are willing to commit their time to operating in support of the HWN's mission during Net activations. The Net sessions can be long, and, in the recent absence of sunspots, pretty grueling."

Lefavour said that the HWN is looking for new members with stations that can effectively communicate with Central America and the Caribbean, Mexico and South Texas on the 20 meter band. "With the low solar activity, our Assistant Net Manager Brad Pioveson, W9FX, is very interested in finding more members that can help with Net Control Station duties on the low ends of the 40 and 80 meter phone bands," Lefavour said, "as we're having to broaden our focus from only operating on 14.325 MHz. During the 2008 hurricanes, 20 meters died after the Sun went down -- we no longer had the ability to effectively communicate with reporting stations or the National Hurricane Center. So in preparation for the 2009 hurricane season, we're open to applications from qualified amateurs who are located anywhere within North America or the Caribbean. With propagation having been so unpredictable in the past couple of years, you never know who's going to be able to hear the hurricane-affected area."

Lefavour said that bilingual hams are especially welcome: "We recognize that some Latin American operators hesitate to check in and send reports to us if they aren't fluent in English, so we're also interested in hearing from hams that are fluent in both Spanish and English. When we're working storms that are either affecting or threatening areas where Spanish is the language of choice, we always try to have one or more bilingual HWN members on hand to help with reporting. Those who have previously applied for HWN membership are encouraged to submit new applications. New applicants are also encouraged to apply."

Lefavour said that the Hurricane Watch Net is generally activated when a named Atlantic basin storm is within 300 miles of landfall. Hurricane season in the Atlantic Ocean runs from June 1-November 30, peaking from late August through September; the Pacific Ocean season runs from May 15-November 30. Of course, hurricanes may occur at any time of the year. The Tropical Meteorology Project at Colorado State University predicts that the 2009 hurricane season will see above-average activity with 14 named storms and seven hurricanes, three of which will be Category 3 or higher. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) defines a normal hurricane season as having 9-12 named storms -- with 5-7 of those reaching hurricane strength -- and 1-3 major hurricanes.

Respectfully Submitted,

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