



SKYWARN OPERATIONS MANUAL

National Weather Service Forecast Office
Albany, New York

For Eastern New York – Southern Vermont – Berkshire
County Massachusetts and Litchfield County Connecticut

Fourth Edition – September 2012

I. INTRODUCTION and ORGANIZATION

1.1 Purpose of This Manual

This manual is designed to be used as a reference guide for SKYWARN operations in the jurisdictions under the National Weather Service (NWS) Albany, NY, Forecast Office's warning area of responsibility. As a reference, it will never be complete and it is expected that individual counties will supplement this manual with their own internal policies and procedures, keeping the bi-directional flow of critical information moving smoothly and un-impeded.

The Albany area SKYWARN has a large area of responsibility which roughly extends from the north end of Lake George to near Newburgh and from just east of Utica to the Vermont-New Hampshire border and then south through Berkshire County, MA and Litchfield County, CT.

Training cannot, and should not, take place "on the job" during severe weather. Proper training is essential for the effective flow of information between SKYWARN spotters and the NWS and/or emergency management personnel. This includes training for spotters as well as net control volunteers. To be effective, everyone in the SKYWARN "system" needs to know their roles BEFORE severe weather strikes.

1.2 Purpose of SKYWARN

SKYWARN is the NWS national program of trained volunteer severe weather spotters. SKYWARN volunteers support their local community and government by providing the NWS with timely and accurate severe weather and flood reports. These reports, when integrated with modern NWS technology, are used to inform communities of the proper actions to take as severe weather threatens. SKYWARN, formed in the early 1970's, has historically provided critical severe weather information to the NWS in time to get the appropriate warnings issued. Thus the key focus of the SKYWARN program is to save lives and property through the use of the observations and reports of trained volunteers.

Each NWS forecast office runs its own SKYWARN program. It is a goal and a challenge to continually improve the SKYWARN system and to integrate new technologies and procedures to best fulfill SKYWARN's mission of saving lives and property. This includes but is not limited to; linked repeater systems, IRLP and VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol).

1.3 Role of Amateur Radio in SKYWARN

Amateur radio has been, and always will be, a critical component of the Albany area SKYWARN program. In the eastern New York and western New England area we are extremely fortunate to

have a large number of trained SKYWARN spotters who are also amateur radio operators. This dual role for amateur radio operators is a natural result of their inherent interest and fascination with natural and scientific phenomena (especially the weather!) and with cutting edge technology such as Doppler radar and lightning detection devices. When this fascination is combined with the ability and desire to be trained to communicate severe weather observations via amateur radio in a professional and effective manner, the synergy is hard to duplicate. Finally, amateur radio operators have a long history of using their training, skills and equipment in uncompensated public service to help the community at large, which is precisely the focus of the SKYWARN system.

The close working relationship between the NWS and the amateur radio community provides many special benefits to each group. These benefits are highlighted in the following goals for the SKYWARN Amateur Radio operations:

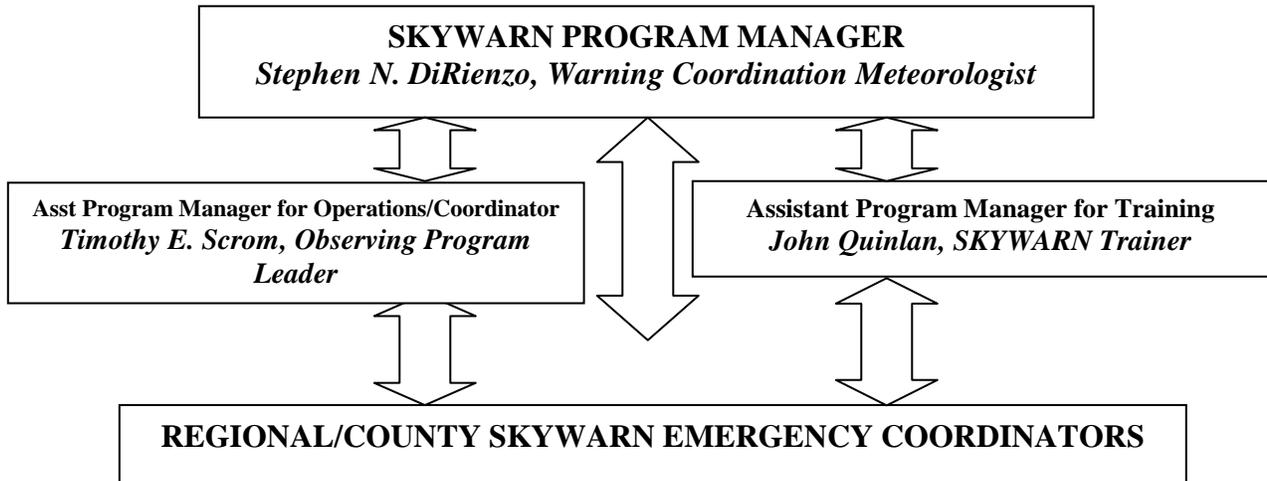
1. To provide the NWS with timely and accurate severe weather reports via amateur radio. This includes both; incoming reports of severe weather per the NWS criteria; and amateur radio operators making observations at specific locations in response to a NWS request. For example, amateurs have often been asked to monitor river and creek flooding situations at certain critical points.
2. To create and maintain an organized communication network for passing critical severe weather traffic in a timely fashion to and from the NWS in the event that normal communications have been interrupted. The NWS has lost normal communications services in the past and it is likely that the SKYWARN Amateur Radio Net would be activated in future communications emergencies.
3. To disseminate warnings and weather statements issued by the NWS to the amateur radio community. Every attempt is made to read special and severe weather statements issued by the NWS over the SKYWARN Net, as well as updated storm movement information to keep amateurs informed of developing situations and to practice for situations when normal communications channels fail.
4. To organize and train amateur radio operators to prepare themselves and their families for disaster or emergency weather related situations so that they may be available to assist in emergency net operations. This preparedness training is critical if the SKYWARN system is to be expected to operate reliably during true emergency situations.

1.4 Organizational Structure of SKYWARN

SKYWARN is NOT a club. It is a true volunteer public service whose membership is open to all who wish to participate. All reports of severe weather through the SKYWARN system are appreciated. Scripts have been set up to outline the NWS criteria for severe weather on

which observations are requested so that untrained observers may participate. Despite the scripts, all net participants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the excellent, interesting and free training provided by the NWS covering basic and advanced SKYWARN training as well as organized specialized courses on winter storms and floods.

The structure of SKYWARN under the Albany NWS jurisdiction is as follows:



1.5 SKYWARN's Relationship to ARRL/ARES/RACES/REACT

The Amateur Radio operator's participation in the SKYWARN program is formally acknowledged and encouraged in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between The American Radio Relay League (ARRL) and the NWS. This agreement indicates that the ARRL will encourage its local volunteer groups operating as the Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) to provide the NWS with spotters and communicators as requested by the NWS during times of severe weather.

Many civil disasters are a direct result of severe weather and/or are exacerbated by severe weather. Accordingly, the NWS may utilize the SKYWARN amateur radio operators not only to obtain and disseminate severe weather observations and warnings, but may also use the amateur radio operators to maintain close coordination with Emergency Managers under Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES).

Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams (REACT) also support SKYWARN. REACT nets may take reports of severe weather and relay them to the NWS either by normal communications modes (phone, FAX etc.) or by linking up with a REACT member who is also an amateur radio operator who can relay the severe weather information to SKYWARN Net Control through the SKYWARN amateur radio frequencies. Although it may take some creativity and organization, the goal is to include all groups in the SKYWARN system who wish

to participate.

1.6 Role of SKYWARN Net Control

SKYWARN Net Control is the critical role in any SKYWARN activation. It is a role that will always challenge all of an amateur radio operator's communications and technical skills. It is also an extremely responsible role in that the safety of lives and property may rest on the amateur's skills. Although this role is challenging, with proper training and experience, this role can also be extremely rewarding when a job is successfully completed.

It is the purpose of this manual to provide the general guidelines for SKYWARN operations. While consistency of procedures from net to net is important, no two SKYWARN activations will be exactly the same. Therefore, the net control operator has the authority and responsibility to do everything necessary, within FCC rules, to ensure that the SKYWARN mission is performed to the best of his or her abilities.

It is essential that SKYWARN net control operators be familiar with the operation of the SKYWARN Amateur Radio Station, as well as NWS procedures, to be able to do an effective job.

1.7 Role of the SKYWARN County Coordinator

The SKYWARN County Coordinator organizes the operation of the entire SKYWARN Amateur Radio community within their county to ensure operation in accordance with the goals of the NWS. Specific duties of the SKYWARN County Coordinator include, but are not limited to:

1. Keeping a set of recommended protocols and an operating manual up to date.
2. Coordinating simple, effective and efficient procedures for passing traffic between local SKYWARN nets and the NWS forecasters.
3. Sharing information, ideas, and protocols with other SKYWARN programs throughout the country to develop the best possible local SKYWARN program.
4. Coordinating the activities of SKYWARN with ARES, RACES, REACT, and government agencies to best fulfill SKYWARN's goals.

This volunteer position is appointed by the NWS SKYWARN Program Manager to ensure that the person chosen can work well with the NWS forecasters and management as well as the amateur radio community. The person chosen for this position must possess superior coordination and communication skills and should be readily available to the NWS.

1.8 Role of the SKYWARN Regional Coordinator

The SKYWARN Regional Coordinator organizes the operation of the entire SKYWARN Amateur Radio community within those counties for which the Albany NWS office is responsible. Specific duties of the SKYWARN Regional Coordinator include, but are not limited to:

1. Keeping a set of recommended protocols and an operating manual up to date to ensure compliance.
2. Coordinating simple, effective and efficient procedures for passing traffic between local SKYWARN nets and the NWS forecasters.
3. Sharing information, ideas, and protocols to develop the best possible local SKYWARN program.
4. Coordinating the activities of SKYWARN with ARES, RACES, REACT, and government agencies to best fulfill SKYWARN's goals.
5. Assist County EC's in the execution of their duties and act as a liaison with the NWS and other agencies.

This volunteer position is appointed by the NWS SKYWARN Program Manager and/or ARES, to ensure that the person chosen can work well with the NWS forecasters and management as well as the amateur radio community. The person chosen for this position must possess superior coordination and communication skills and should be readily available to the NWS.

The SKYWARN Regional Coordinator is also responsible for making sure that at least one "coordinator" is on duty at all times to receive the NWS notification and to take appropriate action as requested by the NWS. This will often involve passing the SKYWARN activation instructions and trained net control volunteer lists from coordinator to coordinator when an out of town trip is expected. It is imperative that this position be covered at ALL TIMES!

II. ACTIVATION of SKYWARN

2.1 NWS Decision to Activate SKYWARN

The NWS Albany Forecast Office activates SKYWARN when severe weather is expected to

affect its area of warning responsibility. See map in Appendix D of this manual. SKYWARN is activated for many forms of anticipated severe weather including tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, floods, and major winter storms.

2.2 Activation Time Frames and Requested Staffing

For short lead time events (i.e., severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and flooding), SKYWARN is activated when the WATCH is issued or when severe weather is probable. The lead time may vary from zero (0) to six (6) hours. Volunteers are usually requested to staff the NWS SKYWARN Amateur Radio station when a Severe Thunderstorm Watch or Tornado Watch has been initiated for our County Warning Area (CWA). The minimum number of counties in the Watch should be at least eight to call in operators. Contact the Net Control Call Up Tree members (called in order) to arrange for a severe weather operator. SKYWARN operations could last for up to twelve hours for short term events.

During long lead time severe weather events such as hurricanes, stream and river flooding, and winter storms, SKYWARN is activated when the WARNING is issued. Lead time may be anywhere from zero (0) to twelve (12) hours. Requests to staff the SKYWARN Amateur Radio Station will depend on the forecaster's assessment of the nature of the storm and the storm's potential. Long-term events may cause SKYWARN to be activated for extended periods of time, possibly measured in days, such as during the Blizzard of '93.

2.3 NWS SKYWARN Activation Steps

Once NWS forecasters have made the decision to activate SKYWARN, the following action is taken by the forecasters:

The Hazardous Weather Outlook message is updated with the specifics and the last segment of the message, "Spotter Information Statement" is changed accordingly with activation information naming specific counties to be activated. In addition notify the Regional SKYWARN Coordinator or designate when a Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado Watch is issued even if it does not include enough counties to necessitate activating Net Control in the office.

The Hazardous Weather Outlook message is a permanent part of the 24 NOAA Weather Radio broadcast cycle and is also on our web page. Generally, if there is a threat of severe weather, it will be contained in the first segment of the message and the Spotter Information Statement will state that SKYWARN activation may be necessary later in the day. It is issued routinely by around 5 AM daily and is updated as necessary.

This message alerts SKYWARN spotters and emergency managers to be on the lookout for severe weather and to be ready to pass reports to NWS by phone if nets are not operating.

Most of the watches and warnings that cause SKYWARN to be activated are tone-alerted and will activate weather alert radios. SKYWARN participants are encouraged to obtain radios with this feature. The tone alert feature is tested each Wednesday between 11 AM and Noon by the NWS. Please make sure that your tone alert is functioning properly!

Below is a listing of the NOAA Weather Radio transmitters that we operate from our office in Albany NY. Also included is the general listening area as well as the Counties for which we issue tone alerts on that particular transmitter. If you have a Specific Area Message Encoder capable receiver, this information is critical for your use in programming your receiver. The numerical codes necessary to enter into the receiver are listed on our web page under the NOAA Weather Radio section.

Transmitter	Station	Frequency	Listening Area	Counties
Gore Mountain, NY	KSC-43	162.450	upper Hudson Valley, southern Adirondacks & west central VT	Addison & Rutland VT. Essex, Fulton, Hamilton, Saratoga, Warren & Washington NY.
New Scotland / Albany NY	WXL-34	162.550	Capital District, eastern Mohawk & Schoharie Valleys	Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady & Schoharie NY.
Poughkeepsie / Highland, NY	WXL-37	162.475	mid-Hudson Valley & Litchfield Hills	Litchfield CT. Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Sullivan & Ulster NY.
Fairfield / Middleville, NY	WXM-45	162.425	Southern Adirondacks, Mohawk & Schoharie Valleys	Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Montgomery, Onieda, Otsego & Schoharie NY.
Ames Hills / Marlboro VT	WXM-68	162.425	southern VT, western MA & southwest NH	Bennington, Windham & Windsor VT. Berkshire, Franklin & Hampshire MA. Sullivan & Cheshire NH.
Egremont, MA	WXM-80	162.450	Taconics, southern VT, western MA & Litchfield Hills	Bennington & Windham VT. Columbia & Rensselaer NY. Litchfield CT. Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire & Hampden MA.
Mt. Greylock, MA	WWF-48	162.525	Taconics, southern VT, western MA & Litchfield Hills	Bennington & Windham VT. Columbia & Rensselaer NY. Litchfield CT. Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire & Hampden MA.
Cornwall CT	WWH-33	162.500	northwest CT & adjacent areas of NY / MA	Fairfield, Hartford, Litchfield & New Haven CT. Dutchess & Putnam NY. Berkshire & Hampden MA.

2.4 SKYWARN County EC Activation Steps

1. The SKYWARN County EC, or his designate, receives notification and calls the NWS as

necessary.

2. The EC is briefed by the forecaster on:
 - a. Nature of expected severe weather;
 - b. Expected onset of severe weather (immediate or later in day);
 - c. Expected duration of event;
3. The SKYWARN County EC or designate, assesses the situation and takes the appropriate action for his/her county SKYWARN operations, contacting personnel to run a net, and if 8 or more counties are within a Severe Thunderstorm or Tornado Watch the SKYWARN Regional Coordinator or designate contacts persons within commuting distance of the Albany NWS to operate the NWS SKYWARN station. The SKYWARN County EC or designate is to get information to NWS Albany by the quickest means possible.
4. Meanwhile, if a SKYWARN County EC or designate determines that a severe weather report, such as a funnel cloud, needs to be made known to the forecasters IMMEDIATELY, and the Amateur Radio volunteer has not arrived at the NWS, please make sure that the NWS is informed of the traffic by quickest means possible.

2.4.1 Net Control Operator Personnel List

The SKYWARN County EC's will maintain a list of personnel available at specific times to run a SKYWARN net in their county.

The SKYWARN Regional Coordinator will maintain a list of operators for the NWS SKYWARN station, and provide this list to the NWS. The operators would be chosen on an as available basis. The goal is to have numerous operators on the list, many of whom are likely to be available in the afternoons to cover SKYWARN activations for severe weather. The NWS must have the ability to contact operators at any time and therefore should have the amateur's home phone, work phone, car phone, FAX, and pager numbers.

III. SKYWARN PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS

3.1 Operating Rules for County or Regional SKYWARN Nets

The normal net protocols will be utilized on all nets. Above all else, common courtesy must be

exercised. The NWS relies on the SKYWARN spotters for critical information which could impact life and property. An organized effort to channel this information to the NWS must be in place in order for all to benefit from the SKYWARN operation.

As mentioned elsewhere in this manual, the County EC or his/her designate, is responsible for the SKYWARN net operation. It is assumed that permission has been granted, prior to SKYWARN operations, by the various repeater trustees, licensees or owners, for the use of said repeaters. It is the responsibility of the County EC's to gain that permission. It is also the responsibility of the County EC's to ensure that backup communications are available, such as other repeaters or other bands.

Unless the controlling interests of specific repeaters feel it necessary, or unless the conditions warrant it, no repeater should be dominated by SKYWARN activities. In most instances, normal amateur communications can continue with only an informal SKYWARN net in operation. Only during particularly severe weather such as a tornado on the ground or significant damage from severe thunderstorms or flooding, should the SKYWARN net transition to a formal (directed) net.

The SKYWARN operator of the NWS SKYWARN station will, when roving for reports, check into specific nets for reports or to read warnings or statements, following net protocols. If no net is in progress, the operator will make a general call for information, or make an announcement that specific information is available and ask if anyone was present to receive it. The operator will not initiate any net. The SKYWARN State Coordinators shall follow the same procedures.

There will be instances when communications problems will prevent SKYWARN spotters from communicating with their own counties and or the NWS. In that case, it is highly desirable that those reports be handled in the same way as reports for the Albany NWS. In so doing, the report will be relayed by the Albany NWS to the NWS office that is responsible for the area the spotter was reporting from, i.e., Burlington, Boston, Binghamton, Buffalo or Brookhaven (NYC). This is a common practice throughout the NWS. In the event of a widespread severe weather outbreak, the SKYWARN Regional Coordinator or designate will specify a coordinated net to accept reports from local nets.

3.2 Local Weather Nets/Self Activation

The weather is very difficult to predict! Local severe weather, such as flooding or severe thunderstorms, may develop suddenly without the NWS issuing a watch or warning, or be too localized for the NWS to activate SKYWARN.

The following is the recommended procedure for implementing local area weather nets.

The activation of a local area weather net should be coordinated on the local level with an ARES

EC and the repeater licensee, preferably in advance of the weather emergency. To be successful and to serve the NWS in the best possible manner, the program needs to be self policing. Therefore, the structure should be similar to any SKYWARN net where there is one Net Control station and one assistant to make sure that severe weather reports are relayed to the forecasters.

Upon receiving reports of a serious local weather situation developing, the Net Control station should contact the NWS lead forecaster by telephone to:

1. Relay the weather information.
2. Confirm that the NWS has not activated SKYWARN and will not do so (AFTER having listened to available sources).
3. Receive a request from the lead forecaster that a localized area of severe weather is in your location and that reports are needed. Please give the lead forecaster your name, call sign and telephone number and indicate that you are the contact person for running a local weather net on a particular frequency in a particular area. The forecasters may wish to listen to the net "live."

Please designate the area as a local area weather net and not as a SKYWARN Net. This notifies participants that any critical weather information needs to be relayed to the NWS by telephone and not by amateur radio as, most likely, there is no one listening to the Amateur Radio Station at the NWS.

If SKYWARN is activated after a local area weather net is in progress, the local area net should transition to a SKYWARN Net.

To be effective, the participants in the local area weather net should have completed SKYWARN Basic Spotter Training.

3.3 Handling Non-Severe Weather Reports

Many of the reports received are for non-severe weather. Please be courteous to the report giver and note the amateur's location as you may need to contact the amateur(s) if the storm moves in their direction. As the moment dictates, it may be necessary in periods of extremely severe weather to only take reports from specific areas of interest to the NWS or only reports of severe weather. If the situation arises, please do not be shy about informing the net participants of the exact nature of the information needed and that the only report you will take must meet the severe weather criteria. Please indicate when the net is reopened for all traffic.

IV. NWS STATION OPERATOR PROCEDURES

4.1 Behavioral Rules

4.1.1 DO NOT Bring Children with You!

The NWS Forecast Office is NOT the place for children or sightseers during emergencies. The NWS operations area is not large and is filled with expensive and delicate equipment. Please DO NOT bring people to the NWS who will distract you or the NWS from doing the best possible job. The NWS would be pleased to give your family a tour of the NWS facility at a quiet weather time and upon prior arrangement.

4.1.2 NWS Forecast Office Operating Conditions

When SKYWARN is activated the NWS is usually operating in a high tension and critical weather mode due to weather conditions. This means:

1. Any distractions or interruptions of NWS or SKYWARN operations may mean the loss of life or property.
2. Sensitive information such as severe damage or loss of life may be openly discussed within the NWS office and should not be repeated by SKYWARN volunteers outside the NWS.
3. TV and/or news crews may be present in the forecast office or at a remote operating site. Please refer all media questions to the NWS Severe Weather Coordinator on duty.

4.1.3 No More Than Three (3) Volunteers at the SKYWARN Amateur Radio Station at One Time

No more than three (3) SKYWARN volunteers should be in the forecast office at one time. If, for some reason, there are more than (3) volunteers at the NWS, please take shifts. Off-duty Amateurs may monitor other nets from the NWS lunch room or from their cars in the parking lot.

4.1.4 Preparations for Extended Activation

SKYWARN amateur radio volunteers should be prepared for an extended stay at the NWS if SKYWARN is activated for a hurricane or for severe winter long-duration storms. The nearest food store is about one (1) miles from the forecast office and may not be open or

accessible during extremely severe weather. Volunteers are responsible for bringing food, medications and personal hygiene supplies to maintain themselves for the duration of their stay at the NWS. Please be prepared to be as self-sufficient as possible.

4.2 How To Volunteer for Duty at the NWS

DO NOT GO RUNNING TO THE NWS OR CALL THE NWS AT THE FIRST SIGN OF BAD WEATHER. To be a well coordinated and effective operation we must follow protocol:

1. NWS determines a need for SKYWARN activation and activates SKYWARN.
2. The NWS will contact the SKYWARN Regional Coordinator to notify them that SKYWARN has been activated and to have them arrange for volunteer operators to staff the NWS SKYWARN station whenever 8 or more counties are in a Severe Thunderstorm and/or Tornado Watch.

Volunteer operators may also contact their county SKYWARN EC, or his/her designate, to inform them of their availability. Do not be insulted if your services are not needed at that time. As the weather situation changes, staffing needs may also change.

4.3 Interaction With The Forecasters

The forecaster who briefs the NWS SKYWARN operator upon arrival at the NWS will most likely be the contact person until the NWS shift changes. Please follow your instincts on how to pass information to the forecasters. If the information is **CRITICAL** and **POTENTIALLY LIFE THREATENING**, bring this information to the forecaster **IMMEDIATELY**, otherwise you will need to gauge the situation as to whether the information is important enough to bring to the forecasters attention immediately or if it can wait five or ten minutes until a forecaster comes to the amateur radio station as part of his or her duties. It is a delicate balance to make this critical part of the operation successful and it must be handled with discretion, tact and diplomacy by the operators.

4.4 Briefing Upon Arrival at the NWS

Upon arrival at the NWS, immediately identify yourself to a forecaster as a SKYWARN amateur radio operator and ask the forecaster for a briefing on the severe weather situation. You should get the following information from the forecaster:

1. Where storm(s) are located and in which direction(s) they are traveling;

2. Characteristics and history of the storm(s) (i.e., hail, damaging winds, tornadoes, snow, etc.);
3. What geographic locations/counties are of primary concern to the forecasters; and,
4. The latest severe and/or special weather statement(s) to be read over the net.

4.5 Initial Setup

After receiving the briefing, the SKYWARN operator should take the following steps:

1. Size up the situation and make a plan of attack;
2. Get sufficient copies of the action log forms. Please date the sheet and write legibly. The reports may be used for Storm Data (an official record of the event).
3. Find pens and pencils on the adjacent desk.
4. Set up Radio #1 (VHF/UHF) to access the county(s) of primary concern and roving nets both on two meters and 440. Radio #2 (HF) will require at minimum a General Class license. This transceiver will be utilized for liaison with state agencies and possibly direct communications with outlying areas when other means have failed. The primary and secondary frequencies for each county are listed as Appendix C.
5. Take another deep breath and start roving for reports.
6. Keep the forecasters informed of the reports received.

The NWS SKYWARN volunteer will act as a liaison between the nets and the forecasters. The NWS SKYWARN operator will record all information from the net on the SKYWARN severe weather reporting sheets, will break into the net and get further details (fills) from reporting stations as needed, will read severe and special weather statements over the air, when available, and will interface with the forecasters and inform the net of special areas of interest to the forecasters.

4.6 Ending SKYWARN Operations

When the severe weather situation calms down, a forecaster will indicate to the SKYWARN operator of the NWS station that the station can be secured. At that time, the operator should perform the following shutdown steps:

1. Ask for any additional reports of severe weather.
2. Notify all county nets in operation that the SKYWARN operations are ending and that any further reports of severe weather must be telephoned into the NWS.
3. The station MUST be left in a clean condition READY for the next activation.
4. Please staple all reports and statements together and hand them to the lead forecaster!

V. INTERFACING WITH OTHER GROUPS

The NWS is often asked to communicate with other groups in addition to amateur radio operators. Every attempt should be made to have the broadest possible inclusion into the SKYWARN Net. At the present time, there are no facilities to monitor citizens band frequencies at the SKYWARN Amateur Radio Station and no such facilities are planned. Accordingly, if groups such as REACT would like to participate in SKYWARN nets, it is imperative that the group coordinate with one of their members who is also an amateur radio operator who can relay the reports.

VI. SKYWARN HF OPERATIONS

HF will be set up at NWS for use as backup during major communications outages, contact with government agencies during widespread events. It will also serve as the primary means of communications with areas that are not reachable on VHF, as well as for MARS and SHARES.

VI. PUBLICITY and PUBLIC RELATIONS

An important facet of SKYWARN operations is public relations. SKYWARN provides ample opportunities to demonstrate the unique capabilities of amateur radio as well as the volunteer and public spirit of amateur radio operators. Any questions from the media should be directed to the NWS Severe Weather Coordinator on duty.

There are constant challenges to the radio frequencies set aside for amateur radio use. SKYWARN provides an identifiable and extremely visible opportunity for pursuing amateur radio

in its best light. Severe weather is always of interest to the media. As a direct result of SKYWARN activities, generally, and SKYWARN participation in training exercises, as well as region wide communication drills in particular, and demonstrated professionalism and results as noted in NWS weather statements and reports on severe weather events, a number of Emergency Operations Centers have recognized the benefits of having amateur radio capabilities at their disposal. Thus, the SKYWARN program not only benefits the NWS and the public, but also helps to preserve amateur radio as a national resource.

The NWS does its best to promote the capabilities of the SKYWARN amateur radio net. NWS works closely with FEMA, the American Red Cross, the FCC in Emergency Broadcast Communications and with numerous state and local emergency management agencies. Therefore, SKYWARN has been, and will continue to be, an important vehicle to showcase amateur radio to the agencies involved in the allocation of privileges and frequencies.

SKYWARN has developed a large following of scanner enthusiasts, emergency managers and amateur radio operators. Please remember as you operate, members of the media are monitoring your communications. Let us continue to put Amateur Radio's "best foot forward."