

South Texas Weather Journal



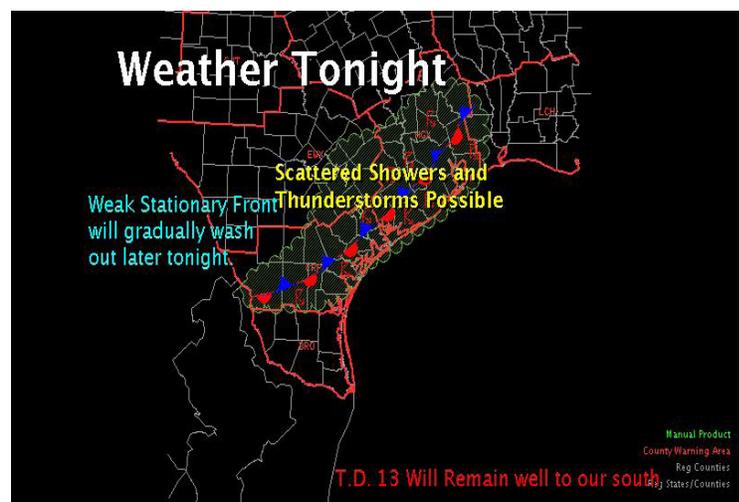
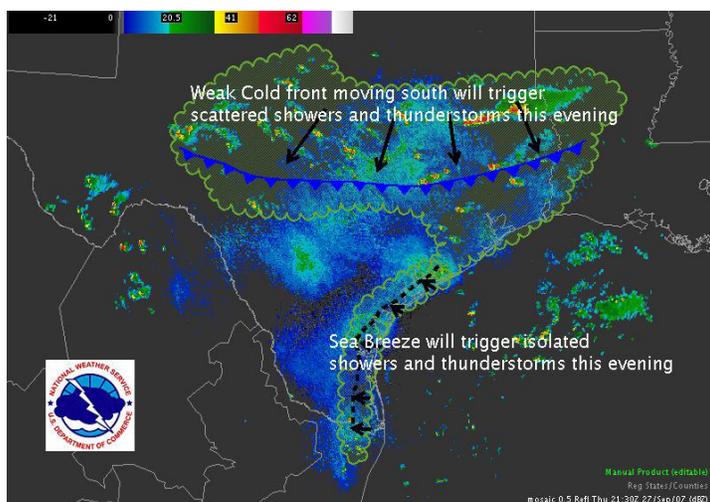
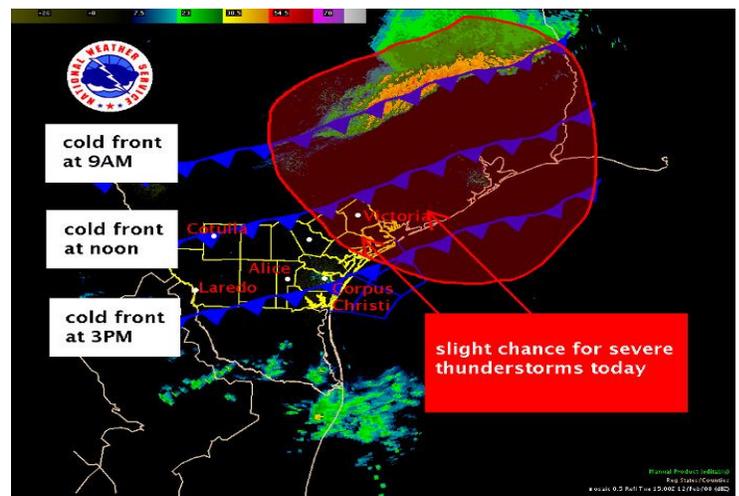
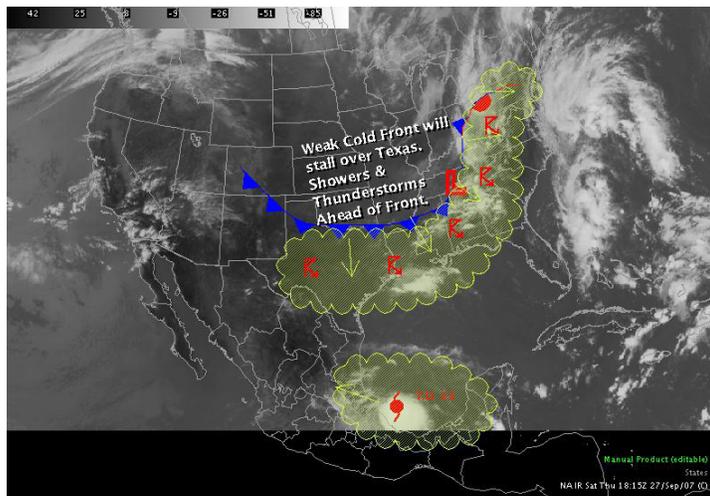
Spring 2008 Edition

Corpus Christi, Texas

Weather Forecast Office

New Graphiccasts to Simplify Short Term Weather Threats

On February 1, 2008 the Corpus Christi National Weather Service office began issuing a new experimental product called the "Graphiccast". The "Graphiccast" is used to convey short-term weather occurrences over South Texas through a picture format in conjunction with the text-based NOWCAST, which has been issued on an "as needed" basis for several years. The "Graphiccast" enables users to quickly be alerted to developments in the weather without having to read through lines of text contained in the NOWCAST that can sometimes become lengthy when the weather situation changes rapidly or is complex. "Graphiccasts" can be accessed from an icon on the NWS Corpus Christi web page at: <http://www.weather.gov/corpuschristi>



Above: Examples of South Texas Graphiccasts

A Look Back in History

Drought Conditions Returned in Late 2007:

Drought conditions have returned to most of South Texas, due to below normal rainfall since late 2007. Although the term "drought" may be defined differently for distinct types of climate regimes, the term implies a precipitation deficiency over an extended period of time. The term "drought" can also be defined as a moisture deficit severe enough to have social, environmental or economic impacts. Droughts are normally classified as agricultural (affecting crops, pastures, and grasslands), and/or hydrologic (affecting water supplies such as rivers, groundwater and reservoirs). There are five categories of drought intensity:

1. Abnormally Dry: an area is going into or coming out of a drought, where plant growth is slowed, or some water deficits exist
2. Moderate Drought: some damage to crops and pastures occur, and/or reservoirs and streams are low
3. Severe Drought: crop and pasture losses are likely, and/or water shortages are common
4. Extreme Drought: major crop and pasture losses occur, and/or widespread water shortages exist
5. Exceptional Drought: widespread crop and pasture losses occur and/or water shortages in reservoirs and streams result in emergency actions being taken.

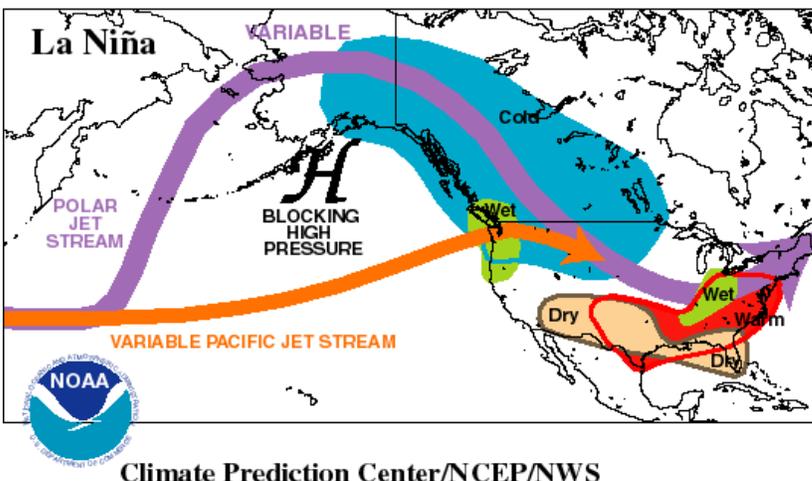
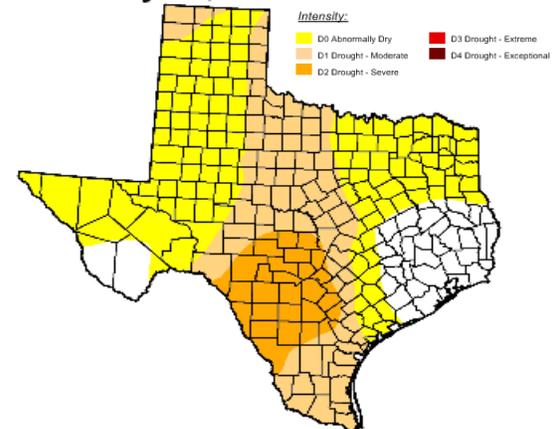
The Drought Monitor product can be found at:

<http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>.

As of this writing, moderate drought conditions exist over portions of the western and southern Coastal Bend and moderate to severe drought conditions exist over the Rio Grande Plains. Since current rainfall deficits are mainly impacting farming and ranching, the current drought over South Texas is considered to be agricultural in nature.

Why did South Texas go into a drought, especially since the summer of 2007 was so wet? Since September 2007, South Texas weather has been influenced by unusually cold ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, known as La Nina conditions. The impacts from La Nina are greatest during the fall and winter months. During La Nina episodes, South Texas often experiences above normal temperatures and below normal rainfall, as has been seen recently. During the warmer months of 2007, when La Nina's effects were minimized, slow-moving upper level lows were able to combine with tropical moisture, producing above normal (and at times record) rainfall. With the onset of cooler weather, La Nina not only helped to keep the effects from upper level storm systems north of South Texas, but scoured out moisture ahead of cold fronts, limiting rainfall.

February 12, 2008



Climate Prediction Center/NCEP/NWS

Above: La Niña's impacts on North America

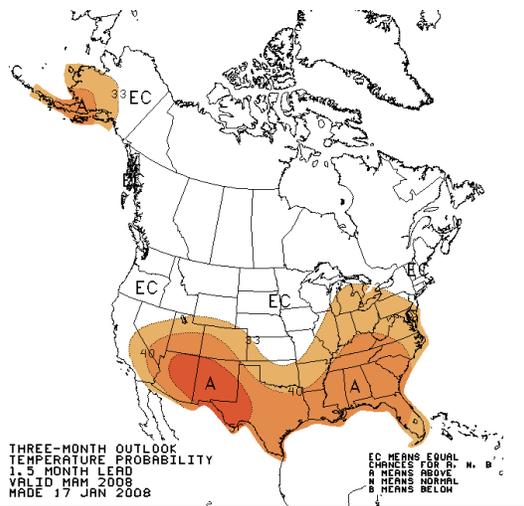
The NWS issues Drought Information Statements during periods of drought. These statements summarize previous weather patterns over recent weeks, the severity of the drought, the agricultural, hydrologic, and fire danger impacts, any restrictions or actions that residents need to take, and the rainfall and drought outlook for the next three months. You can see the latest South Texas Drought Information Statement on the web at: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/data/CRP/ESFCRP>

A Look Ahead

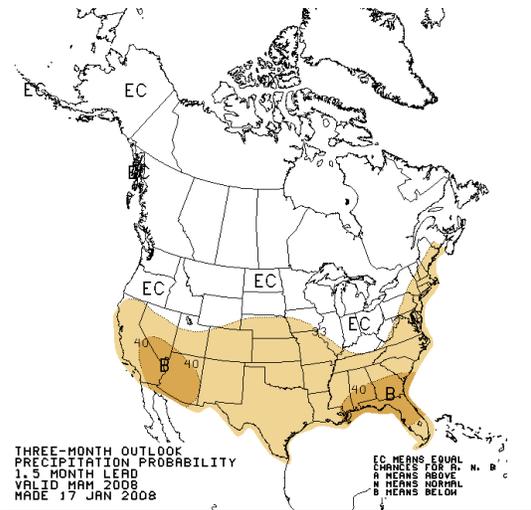
Dry/Warm Spring for South Texas: Agriculture and Fire Danger at Greatest Risk

The National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center produces long term forecasts of temperature and rainfall for the United States. The Spring Outlook (Mar-May) calls for warmer-than-average temperatures across South Texas and below normal precipitation.

Normal high temperatures in April range from near 80 in Victoria to near 90 in Laredo. Lows average in the lower 60s across South Texas in April. Normal precipitation from March through May in Victoria is 10.34 inches, in Corpus Christi 7.27 inches, and in Laredo 5.21 inches.

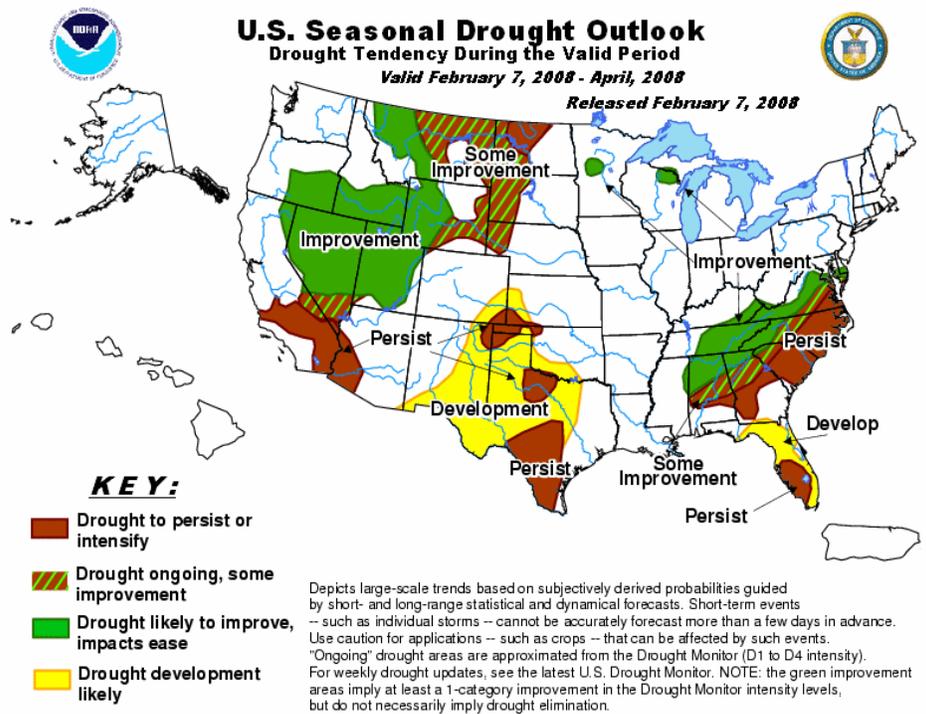


Above: Mar-May Temperature Outlook



Above: Mar-May Precipitation Outlook

Given the below normal precipitation and above normal temperatures expected, moderate to severe drought conditions are anticipated to persist into the Spring across western portions of the Coastal Bend and all of the Rio Grande Plains. Agricultural impacts will be at greatest risk as rainfall deficits continue to increase through the planting season. In addition, an elevated fire danger risk may likely persist into the Spring. The Fire Danger will be at greatest risk during periods when dry Pacific cold fronts bring strong northwest winds, low humidity and little to no precipitation.



A Look Ahead

Hurricane Hunter Aircraft Coming to Corpus Christi!

On April 14, 2008, the NOAA P-3 Hurricane Hunter Aircraft will make a stop in Corpus Christi for the first leg in a five stop Gulf Coast Hurricane Awareness Tour. The plane will be available for public viewing from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. near the Signature Aviation Hanger at the Corpus Christi Intl Airport. Come meet the flight crew and tour the aircraft that flies research and reconnaissance missions into the eye of a hurricane. The plane will also make stops to Galveston, New Orleans, Apalachicola FL, and Ft. Myers FL. Mark your calendar for this is a once in a life-time opportunity.



Remaining 2008 SKYWARN Schedule

Date	County	City	Location	Time
Thu, Feb 5	Webb	Laredo	United Middle School	6:00 PM
Sat, Feb 9	Skywarn Coordination Meeting at NWS			10:00 AM
Tue, Feb 12	Nueces	Corpus Christi	City EOC	7:00 PM
Tue, Feb 19	Kleberg	Kingsville	County Courthouse EOC	6:00 PM
Tue, Feb 19	Live Oak	George West	County Court House	7:00 PM
Wed, Feb 27	Tornado Drill			10:00 AM
Tue, Mar 4	Victoria	Victoria	Patty Dodson Health Center	6:30 PM
Thu, Mar 6	Duval	Freer	Freer Fire House	7:00 PM
Tue, Mar 11	McMullen	Tilden	County Courthouse	10:00 AM
Thu, Mar 27	Nueces	Corpus Christi	Mount Olive Church	7:00 PM

The Coop Corner

Changes to the Cooperative Data Transmissions

The NWS made a transition from WxCoder II to WxCoder III on Feb 1, 2008. WxCoder III includes enhanced web-based capabilities that will allow observers to provide data more quickly and accurately while reducing costs. The old web address to access WxCoder is no longer in use. The new web address is:

<http://wxcoder.org>

WxCoder III offers a number of improvements for the observer, the National Weather Service (NWS), the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC), and the six Regional Climate Centers (RCC) who work to collect, quality control, and redistribute the COOP data. The IVROCS telephone entry system will also be added to this system and be ingested into WXCODER III. Improvement of the new WxCoder III system includes a user-friendly web interface and new help menus. Monthly forms now will automatically sum and average temperature, precipitation and snowfall observations. WxCoder III provides immediate data quality assurance through several routine functions and provides more space for the observer remarks. There is an advanced NWS Weather Forecast Office (WFO) administrative interface. NWS supervising offices can customize observer inputs and ensure easy and timely two-way communication with Coop Observers.

WxCoder III provides enhanced front-end data quality control features, which significantly reduce data errors from manual entry of daily data, keypunch errors, and incorrect administrative information. Examples of these quality control checks include but are not limited to: Temperature consistency checks (e.g., maximum temperature cannot be less than minimum temperature for the same observing period, etc.); Precipitation consistency checks (e.g., precipitation values cannot be negative); Winter precipitation consistency checks (e.g., if snowfall exceeds three inches, snow depth must increase, etc.); and Gross limits checks (values cannot exceed fixed numbers and site records).

Even if observers don't send data daily, it is requested that they please try to send the data on a daily basis, even for those only reporting rainfall. If it is zero rainfall it is still useful and it is important for record keeping purposes. Forms at the end of the month will now be tallied and they will be able to be printed and sent to the NWS Weather Forecast Office.

Thanks to all the Cooperative observers for your participation, we really appreciate you sending the data to us on a timely basis.



In cooperation with the National Weather Service, Regional Climate Centers, and National Climatic Data Center



EM Conversation

A Preparedness Interview With Corpus Christi Emergency Manager Randy Sijansky

Randy, what is the biggest change you have seen in the emergency management community since 9/11?

The greatest change in emergency management was brought about by the terrorist attacks on the world trade center. For the first time, heavy equipment operators, construction personnel and transit workers were recognized as "first responders" because of their life saving work. Soon after that the formation of Department of Homeland Security marked a major shift of how emergency management will be viewed. The new federal response plan set requirements and takes best practices from a range of incident management disciplines including: homeland security, emergency management, law enforcement, firefighting, public works, public health and the private sector and integrates them into one unified structure. In fact, our plans meet the state and federal requirement of the National Incident Management System.

How have your duties changed over the last decade in emergency management?

I feel it would best to review the past several decades when emergency management was synonymous with civil defense and the emergency manager was often a retired military officer. The focus was on military oriented defense planning with emphasis on response and recovery. Since then, emergency management has gone through a number of evolutions. It shifted from war planning and radiological defense to an all hazards approach which now focuses on natural hazards. With this shift, the profession evolved to include civilians with professional backgrounds, college degrees and disaster field experience.

Randy, we often hear the term crisis management? How is it utilized for the city of Corpus Christi?

Our city has an advanced level of preparedness and includes annexes that relate to a particular area such as warning, communication, evacuation, search and rescue just to name a few. We review our plans annually and assess our threat risks and vulnerabilities. We conduct exercises and continually train to sharpen our skills. Dealing with a real crisis includes identifying the real nature of the current crisis, intervening to minimize damage and recovering from the crisis. Regaining continuity of government is essential to restoring public services and public confidence.

Randy, what is the main mission of the Corpus Christi Emergency Management?

Emergency Management is the managerial function charged with creating the framework within our community to reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters. Our mission is to protect our community by coordinating and integrating all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from natural or man made acts of terrorism. As we move into the future, we must continue to plan, train, and exercise and most importantly continue community relations on all hazards that may pose a risk.

Randy, it's been nearly 38 years now since the Coastal Bend has experienced a major hurricane, when Hurricane Celia struck in 1970. As you reflect on this event, what is the single most important lesson you can pass on to the community on how to prepare for a hurricane to affect the region.

As I mentioned before, emergency management has evolved through the years to meet the demands. We have adapted and strengthened our skills in planning, training and drills. Since 1970, Corpus Christi has seen and increase in population and business growth. Most residence living on the island has never been through a tropical storm or a major hurricane. Our single most important threat to our city would be a major hurricane strike. We conduct various public awareness campaigns regarding hurricane preparedness by providing information on our local cable access channel, city website, brochures in utility bills, public presentations and safety fairs. We encourage the public to have an evacuation plan and be prepared when a disaster strikes.

What else would you suggest for the community to prepare for?

There were many lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and how nature can devastate a community. Individuals living near a coast should be aware of the risks. Persons should understand that barrier islands can be impacted by storm surge. The rise in tide and wall of water can cut off evacuation routes sooner than inland areas. Citizens should monitor weather conditions from the local National Weather Service and listen for important instructions from the office of emergency management. Planning is the key to success. If you decide to evacuate don't hesitate leave early to avoid traffic congestions.

Thank you Randy for your insight and experiences. Corpus Christi is better prepared to respond to disasters due to efforts of the Corpus Christi Office of Emergency Management and its strong relationship with the National Weather Service.

Staff Spotlight



Bill
Harrison

Electronic
Technician

William (Bill) Harrison, a native Texan from Sealy, entered into the Air Force in 1972, learning the skills needed to calibrate and repair meteorological sensing equipment to support the military's flying mission. After separating from the Air Force in 1976 Bill was selected by the National Weather Service for a position in Galveston, where he attended numerous classes in the repair and calibration of NWS meteorological and communications equipment. In 1979 Bill transferred to Del Rio, where balloon sounding and hydro meteorology equipment were the prime focus of new skills in addition to the 74C radar and AFOS.

One more transfer brought Bill to Corpus Christi in 1995. While in Corpus Christi Bill has become one of the NWS's premier experts in the 88D Doppler radar and its associated control and communications equipment. His expertise in the new RRS radiosonde upper air sensing equipment and several outlying AFOS weather sensing systems makes his daily regime anything but routine.

Congratulations!!!

On behalf of all South Texans they serve, we would like to extend our congratulations to Bill and Rich for being awarded the 2007 Regional and National Cline Awards for Engineering, Facilities and Electronics.



Rich
Martinez

Electronic
Technician

Richard Martinez Jr. is a Texas native and grew up in the Hill Country. Shortly after graduating High School, he joined the Air Force in May of 1993 and worked as a Radar/Electronics technician for 9 1/2 years. While in the Air Force, he was stationed in various places such as Keesler AFB in Biloxi, MS, Mountain Home AFB, ID, and Aviano Air Base, Italy. The final 2 1/2 years of his Air Force career was spent at Laughlin AFB, in Del Rio, TX where he was introduced to the NEXRAD Doppler Radar system and the National Weather Service for the first time. Some of his Air Force career accomplishments include being awarded two Achievement Medals, obtaining A+ and Network+ computer certifications, and obtaining an Associate of Applied Science in Electronics degree from the Community College of the Air Force.

After becoming familiar with the NEXRAD Doppler Radar system and the National Weather Service, he decided to leave the Air Force in November of 2002 to pursue a career with the National Weather Service. This goal was met when he accepted an Electronics Technician position at the Weather Forecast Office in Brownsville, TX in December of 2003. After a little over a year there, he transferred to WFO Corpus Christi, TX in March of 2005.

In his off time, he enjoys spending time with family and friends, fishing, hunting, golfing, watching movies, and following his favorite sports teams, the San Antonio Spurs and Dallas Cowboys.

NWS Corpus Christi in the Community



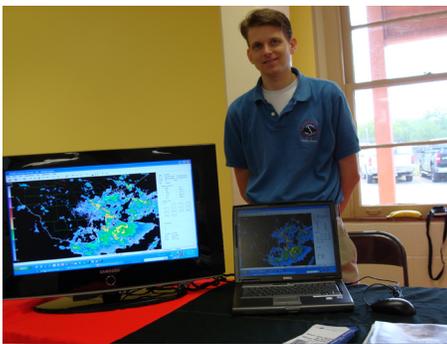
Texas Homeland Security Conference



SKYWARN Day



Port O'Connor Coop Visit



HAMFEST



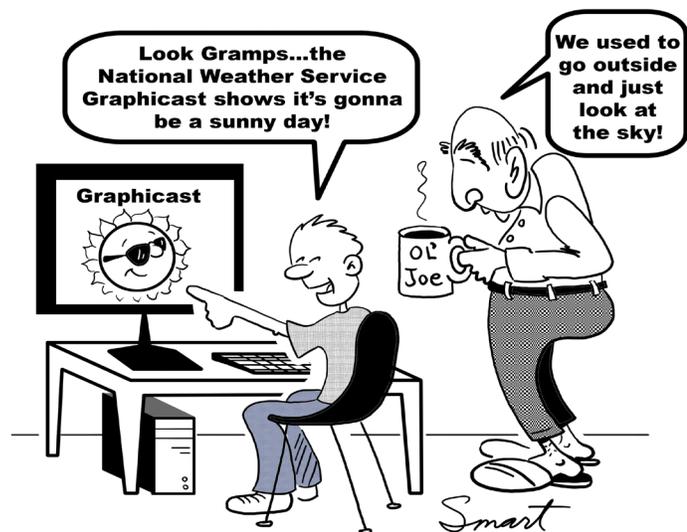
Corpus Christi EOC Visit



Texas State Aquarium Scout Day

WEATHER NUTZ

by Steve Smart



2008 Spring STWJ Team:

Jason Runyen, Fcstr
John Metz, WCM
Greg Wilk, Lead Fcstr
Scott Cordero, MIC
Larry Maifeld, HMT

Steve Smart, HMT
Jim Reynolds, Fcstr
Bill Harrison, El Tech
Rich Martinez, El Tech

In Our Next Issue:

Severe Weather Season Recap
Hurricane Season Outlook
2008 Coastal Bend Hurricane Guide Info
Coop Corner
Staff Spotlight
Community Involvement

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