Suncoast Weather Quarterly

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Inside This Issue...

Feature Article

StormReady is Saving Lives!

Cinema Damage from F4 Tornado in Van Wert, Ohio.
Advanced warning systems used by the theater
manager averted potentially dozens of casualties.

StormReady® is a bold initiative whose primary purpose is to provide America's citizens with the communication and safety skills necessary to protect life and property before and during hazardous weather.

Over the past two decades, NWS hazardous weather warnings have improved markedly. During this time, however, many communities claimed "surprise" despite sufficient lead time. A primary reason for the lack of information was poor communication between the time a warning was issued and the time the event occurred.

Enter StormReady®. Crafted in the late 1990s, StormReady® fuses the NWS with Emergency Management officials to provide the best methods weather hazards communication to all interests, from citizens to businesses.

In Florida, over one third of the counties were StormReady® certified in January, 2003 (right). Many more will come on board before year's end. NWS Tampa Bay will assist the StormReady® effort on the Suncoast by providing outreach through the new Adopt-A-County program! See the article below for details.

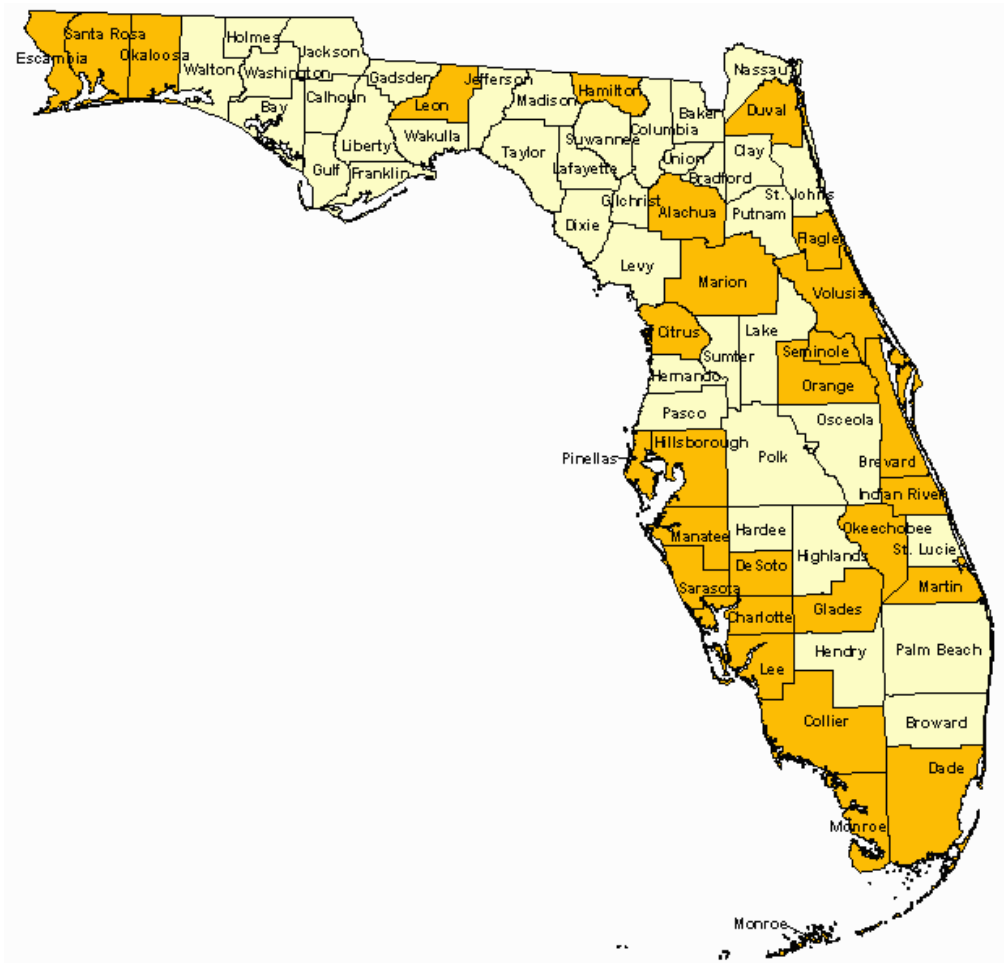


Figure 1. Florida StormReady® Counties (in orange shading) as of January, 2003.

New Program

Adopt-A-County Increases Outreach

The National Weather Service (NWS) in Ruskin has implemented a new program to increase severe weather outreach for the Suncoast called Adopt-a-County. This program expands the number of NWS employees responsible for outreach from just a few to possibly ten or more. The increase in the number of office staff available for outreach will lead to more opportunities for the NWS to speak at a local club or civic event.

Additional outreach also builds better relationships with our customers and that means better service at all levels from our office.

If you are interested in having the NWS talk to your club or organization, contact the appropriate person via the Email address listed below. Please keep in mind that our forecasters and technicians work rotating shifts, and all requests should be submitted at least three weeks in advance.

Daniel Noah	Sumter, Hillsborough, Highlands, Charlotte, Citrus, and Lee
Daniel Noah	Pasco
Daniel Noah	Levy and Hernando
Daniel Noah	Manatee and Sarasota
Daniel Noah	Pinellas and Polk
Daniel Noah	Hardee and Desoto

Report Review

Severe Weather Reporting Tips

It's always a good time to brush up on weather reporting tips. The spring severe weather season is fast approaching, and that will be followed soon after by Florida's daily thunderstorms by late May. For your convenience, a report form is now available on our web site.

What To Report

- Tornadoes,Waterspouts, or Funnel Clouds
- Damaging Winds of 50 kt (58 mph) or greater
- Flooding Rains of 2 inches per hour or 4 inches in 24 hours
- Hail, Any size
- *Any*weather-related damage

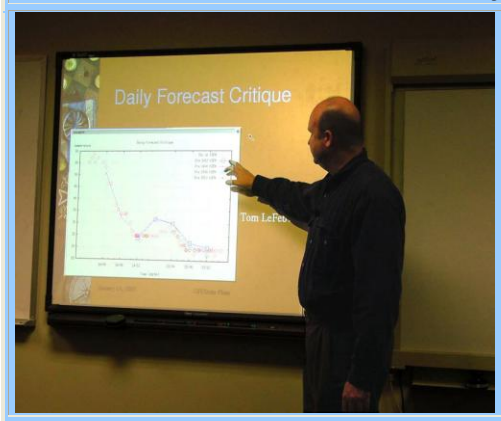
How to Report It

- Call the 1-800 Unlisted Line
- Identify Yourself with your Spotter ID Number
- Report the Phenomena *and* the time it was observed

Tech Corner

NWS Best Practices Technical Expo a HIT!

by Jason Deese, Forecaster



The first annual Florida Technology and Best Practices Expo was held on January 28th and 29th on the campus of the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) in Melbourne, FL. The focus of the conference was to bring together some of the sharpest minds from the Florida NWS for a collaborative meeting to share new ideas. Great advances are being made at individual weather offices, and it was believed that this forum was needed to distribute the innovations state-wide. Attending were members of management, including most of the Science and Operations Officers. In addition, members from the Tampa and Melbourne staff represented their respective offices, while many students and faculty from FIT also sat in on the conference.

The expo included three main areas of interest: technology, best practices, and research. From the technology standpoint, much attention was given to the new Graphical Forecast Editor (GFE), detailed in the Autumn issue of the Suncoast Weather Quarterly. In order to have a seamless transition from the text era into the graphics era, sharing related new technologies is vital. New techniques in severe weather recognition, coastal wave heights and lightning storms were all presented and discussed in open forum. New methods of composing the Hazardous Weather Outlook were discussed further with an eye on a new graphics based version in the near future. Various best practices and new research were also presented with new insights given on the current Florida El Niño season.

The first annual Florida Technology and Best Practices Expo was a big success due to the commitment to excellence of forecasters and management alike across Florida National Weather Service Offices. With the positive results from the expo, it is believed this will become an annual event in which collaboration will lead to service enhancements to the residents of west central and southwest Florida.

Graphical Update

Graphical Forecasts a Reality!

On December 15th, 2002, NWS Tampa Bay began issuing routine forecasts for most standard weather and marine weather elements for west central Florida and the adjacent coastal waters. By the end of February, fire weather elements will be added.

The following is a list of many, but not all, elements that will be posted to the National Digital Forecast

By the end of 2003, NWS offices across the entire lower 48 states will provide data to the NDFD. Figure 1 shows an example of maximum temperatures for the entire country; Figure 2 is an example of maximum temperatures on the Suncoast.

Database (NDFD):

- **Temperature**
- **Wind Speed/Direction**
- **Weather type**
- **Prob. of Precipitation**
- **Precipitation Accum.**
- **Relative Humidity**
- **Wave Heights**
- **Sky Cover**

The digital database opens up limitless possibilities to NWS customers and partners. Users will be able to access data at a five mile grid spacing practically to neighborhood level!

Check out our website for a great example of multiple use forecasts at town level.

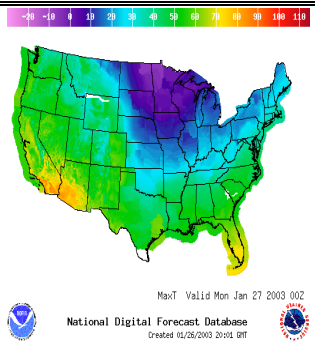


Figure 1. NDFD Maximum Temperature Forecasts, contiguous United States, January 27, 2003.

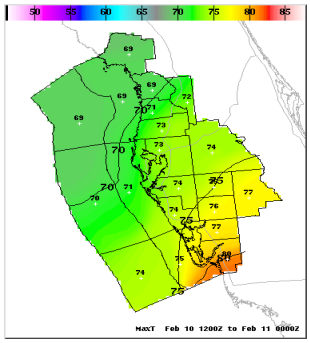


Figure 2. Suncoast maximum temperature forecasts, February 10, 2003.

Storm Reports

Storm Data: NWS' Record of Hazardous Weather

If you've ever called our spotter hotline, our public severe weather line, or used our web report form, you may have asked: Where do those reports go?

After additional scrutiny, the accepted reports are included in the official, certified record of hazardous weather for the United States, ***Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena.***

The data are maintained by the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) in Asheville, NC. These records have been used by a variety of customers in need of hazardous weather confirmation; including insurance companies, lawyers, and other government agencies.

Click on the image at the end of this article to browse some of the data.

Data Reconciliation

Many reports are cross-checked with NWS Doppler Radar output to provide the most accurate event time. Reports subject to the most scrutiny are from indirect sources (such as news clippings). Real-time data from spotters or the general public, as well as data from post-storm surveys, are evaluated less. Dollar damage is estimated for each event. Significant events, such as tornadoes or hurricanes, use values provided from survey results.

The Final Product

After the events are collected and reconciled, the information is locally entered into a storm database software package. Before transmitting to the national database, the monthly file is reviewed by at least two sets of eyes. At NWS Tampa Bay, this includes the WCM and at least one assistant. Any

Raw Data

Hazardous weather reports are collected at the end of each month, and organized by day and/or episode (an episode is loosely defined as 10 or more reports in 3 hours). These include a combination of paper forms, preliminary local storm reports , and newspaper clippings.

discrepancies are corrected, then the monthly collection is sent electronically to the national database. Soon, (normally 60 days after the end of a month), the data are officially published!