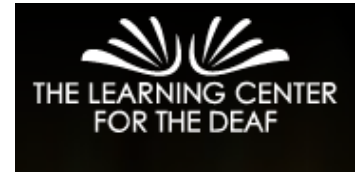


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NWS Boston/Norton and the Learning Center for the Deaf Will Partner to Host a Fully Accessible SKYWARN Weather Spotter Training for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

For more than 50 years, the SKYWARN Spotter Training Program has been provided to the public by the National Weather Service in hopes of educating the public on severe weather identification, safety, and proper reporting techniques. For much of that time, SKYWARN Spotter Training has encouraged reporting severe weather over the phone, offering trained spotters access to a weather reporting phone line to submit reports. Additionally, the SKYWARN program has encouraged the purchase and use of NOAA Weather Radios to receive warning and watch information as well as routine weather forecasts. While the hearing community takes advantage of these tools and opportunities, we forget that it is our hearing that allows us to use them.

The deaf and hard of hearing communities in the United States are larger than one might think. According to the National Institutes of Health, as much as 13% of the U.S. suffers from some form of hearing loss. To put into perspective, the population of Southern New England, as of the 2020 census, was 11,730,744. If the national estimate was applied to this region, the amount of citizens with some form of hearing loss would total more than 1.5 million people! It is not clear exactly how many people in the United States are, in fact, deaf or hard of hearing since the census does not require Americans to indicate that. Also, the definition of what is considered “legally” deaf or hard of hearing is not clearly stated. Some individuals may retain some hearing while others are completely deaf. Regardless, the deaf and hard of hearing populations make up a considerable percentage of our population and up until relatively recently, have not been able to take advantage of services that the NWS offers such as NOAA Weather Radio or SKYWARN Spotter Training without incurring major costs for private interpreters or special radio modifications.

In the last decade or so, the SKYWARN Spotter Training Program has been able to adopt innovations in communication technology. Some of the very same technologies that people who are deaf and hard of hearing use every day (i.e. the internet, mobile devices, and social media) are now being used by the NWS to receive reports from trained spotters as well as disseminate useful severe weather information more efficiently. The creation of the National Weather Service Facebook and Twitter pages across the country, as well as useful reporting avenues such as the Submit Storm Report link, a web based severe weather reporting form, spotters have many other useful ways to report severe weather, including deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

That is why the National Weather Service in Norton, MA has partnered with the **Learning Center for the Deaf in Framingham, MA** to host a SKYWARN Weather Spotter training in their campus gymnasium from **6:30-8:30 PM on Wednesday May 3rd, 2023**. **There will be two interpreters present, from the MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**. The training is what is provided to the hearing community, but with a focus on the more accessible means of reporting. Topics will include NWS product information, such as warnings and watches, Southern New England severe weather climatology, proper reporting techniques, how to safely spot severe storms, and how to identify important cloud features, such as funnel clouds and wall clouds. With this opportunity to educate the deaf and hard of hearing with important severe weather information, this underserved community will now have the tools required to make responsible decisions and take action when life-threatening severe weather is imminent. **Register for free at [weather.gov/boston/skywarn](https://www.weather.gov/boston/skywarn).**