



SKYWARN Newsletter

Program Update: 2026 Edition

Winter 2026 Virtual Classes Announced!

UPCOMING ONLINE COURSE SCHEDULE:

BASIC COURSE:

Date: Tue, Jan 13th: 6 - 8 PM CT

ADVANCED COURSE:

Date: Wed, Jan 28th: 5 - 8PM CT

BASIC COURSE:

Date: Thu, Feb 5th: 6 - 8 PM CT

BASIC COURSE:

Date: Thu, Feb 19th: 6 - 8PM CT

BASIC COURSE:

Date: Wed, Feb 25th: 6 - 8 PM CT

ADVANCED COURSE:

Date: Thu, Mar 12th: 5 - 8PM CT

IN-PERSON COURSE SCHEDULE:

None yet, as they will be announced on a class-by-class basis. Check back!

The NWS New Orleans/Baton Rouge office is happy to announce another round of Basic & Advanced SKYWARN courses to be offered virtually for the Winter 2026 Season! Be sure to spread the news to family and friends or anyone that would be interested! As a reminder, it is recommended that you attend refresher courses every two to three years.

These courses are always presented live, with interactive polls to maximize engagement. You will also be able to interact and talk with a NWS forecaster during a Q and A session at the very end!

TO REGISTER, VISIT:

[WEATHER.GOV/NEWORLEANS/SKYWARN](https://www.weather.gov/neworleans/skywarn)

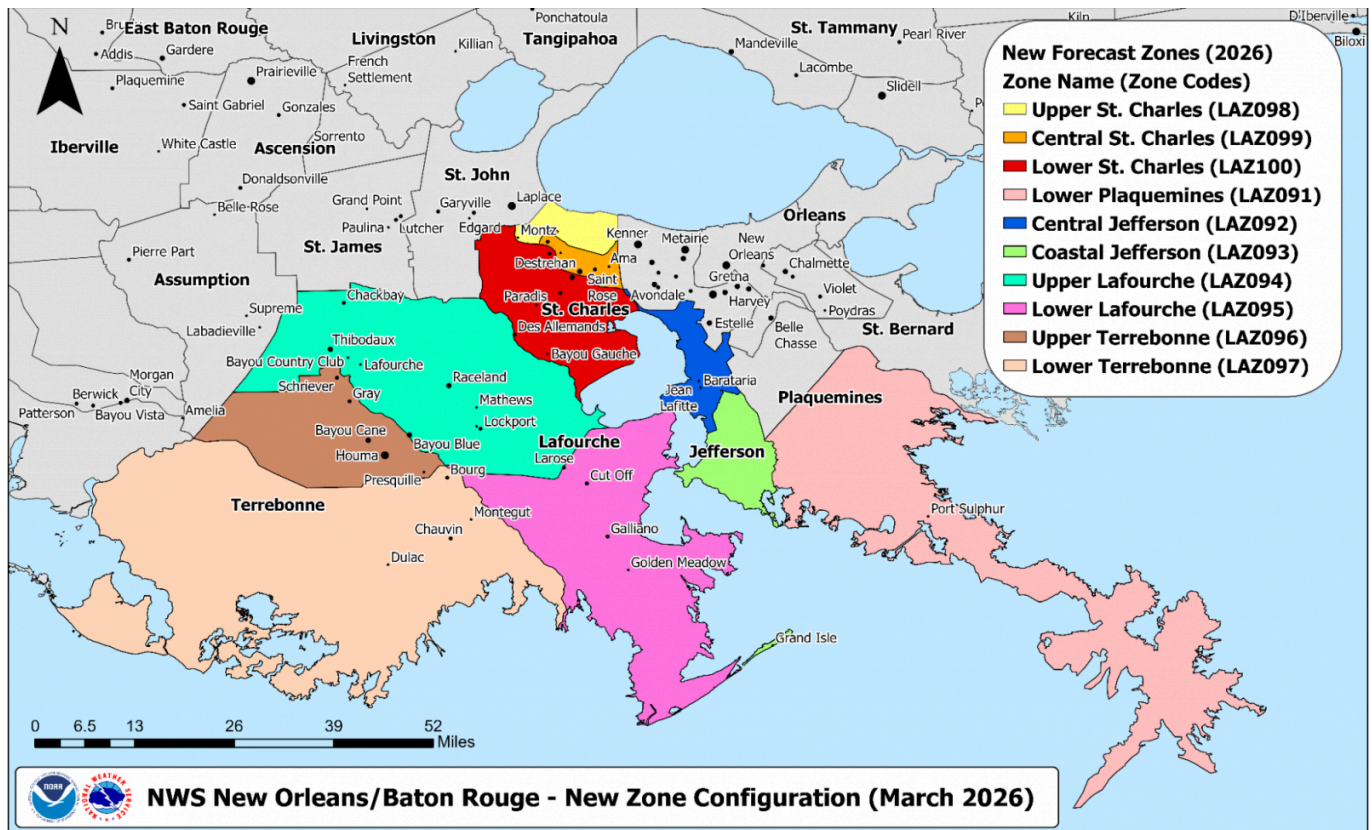
Course dates may be subject to change, especially if hazardous weather threatens the area during the scheduled class time.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Basic Course: [UPDATED TOPICS & FORMAT!]
Covers all the basics associated with tornadoes, hazards, the EF-scale, and local climatology, then dives into other forms of severe weather, including pulse (summer) storms, microbursts, squall lines and flash flooding. Each Basic course includes interactive polls, and ends with a short quiz to apply all you have learned. This course lasts around 2 hours, not including any discussion or questions at the end.

Advanced Courses: [UPDATED TOPICS & FORMAT!] [Highly recommended to take the Basic course before the Advanced Course]
Topics include severe weather forecasting; radar and its applications; storm mode and motion; and supercells and types of tornadoes. Each Advanced course includes interactive polls, and ends with true/false tornado myths. This course lasts around 2.5 hours, not including any discussion or questions at the end.

Top News: NWS New Orleans Will Update Public, Marine and Fire Weather Forecast Zones in March 2026



The NWS office for the New Orleans/Baton Rouge area is planning to update/reconfigure several land and marine forecast zones in southeast Louisiana so forecasts and warnings match today's coastline and water boundaries more accurately, especially after changes caused by Hurricane Ida using updated U.S. Geological Survey data. This is meant to give the public and local partners more precise hazard information and also improve how storm surge warnings are targeted and sent through Wireless Emergency Alerts. The changes would affect the parish zones for Jefferson, Lafourche, Plaquemines, St. Charles, and Terrebonne, including creating new marine zones for Lake Salvador, Lake Cataouatche, Terrebonne Bay, and Barataria Bay, and adjusting nearshore marine waters around Plaquemines Parish.

You can read more about these upcoming zone adjustments, including more details about zone-specific changes on our website: www.weather.gov/lix/forecastzonechanges.

Seasonal Reminder: NWS Continues New Cold Weather Hazard Products!

REFRESHER: Cold Weather Headlines & What They Mean

	FREEZE WATCH / WARNING:	COLD WEATHER ADVISORY:	EXTREME COLD WATCH / WARNING:
DEFINITION	Issued when temperatures are expected to reach 32°F or lower. A WATCH is issued within the <u>next 24 to 48 hrs.</u> A WARNING is issued within the <u>next 12-24 hrs.</u>	Issued for temperatures or wind chills could be a threat to life or property if caution is not exercised.	Issued when temperatures or wind chills pose an imminent threat to life or property and require immediate protective action. A WATCH is issued within the <u>next 24 to 48 hrs.</u> A WARNING is issued within the <u>next 12-24 hrs.</u>
GEOGRAPHIC CRITERIA	<p>Map showing geographic criteria for Freeze Watch/Warning. Callouts indicate "First two freezes" and "Every freeze".</p>	<p>Map showing geographic criteria for Cold Weather Advisory. Callouts indicate "Air temp OR wind chill <20°F" and "Air temp OR wind chill <25°F".</p>	<p>Map showing geographic criteria for Extreme Cold Watch/Warning. Callouts indicate "Air temp OR wind chill <10°F" and "Air temp OR wind chill <15°F".</p>
	MEDIUM Cold Weather Impacts Scale: LOW, MED, HIGH, EXTR	HIGH Cold Weather Impacts Scale: LOW, MED, HIGH, EXTR	EXTREME Cold Weather Impacts Scale: LOW, MED, HIGH, EXTR

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE NEW ORLEANS/BATON ROUGE
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The NWS simplified its suite of cold weather products last year to improve messaging and support better public decision-making. Based on social science surveys and feedback gathered during public and partner engagements, Wind Chill and Hard Freeze products were consolidated into a new set of cold weather products designed to better communicate impacts from both cold air temperatures and dangerous wind chills. This change went into effect on October 1, 2024, and after going through a full winter season under the new setup, this is a reminder of what changed and how we'll continue using the updated products going forward.

To read more about Hazard Simplification and the consolidation of cold weather products used across all NWS offices across the US, read the following hazard simplification one pager here:

- <https://www.weather.gov/media/hazardsimplification/Cold-1-pager-for-SCN-3b%281%29.pdf>

There are three main changes:

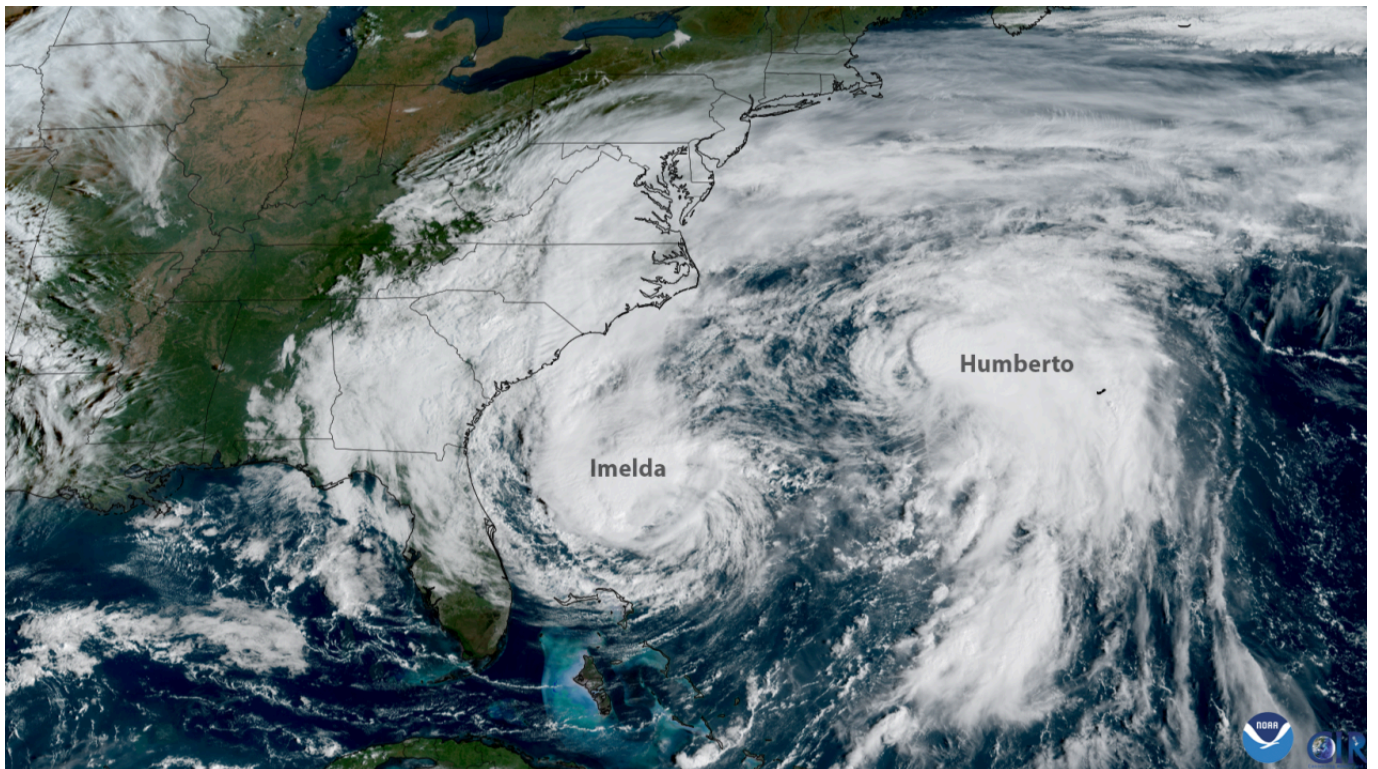
1. Removing the Hard Freeze Warning Product.
2. Changing Wind Chill Advisory, Watch and Warning to Extreme Cold Watch and Warning
3. Changing the thresholds/criteria that we use to issue these products.

OLD Products	→	NEW Products
<p>Freeze Warning - First two instances of 32°F Every instance of 32°F on Southshore OR after prolonged warm period</p>		<p>Freeze Warning - First two instances of 32°F Every instance of 32°F on Southshore OR after prolonged warm period</p>
<p>Hard Freeze Warning - 25°F or less Air Temperature Anywhere</p>		<p>Cold Weather Advisory - 25°F South/20°F North or less Air Temperature OR 25°F South/20°F North or less Wind Chill</p>
<p>Wind Chill Advisory - Wind chills are expected to drop to -5F or less, with winds around 10 mph or more.</p>		<p>Extreme Cold Weather Warning - 15°F South/10°F North or less Air Temperature OR 15°F South/10°F North or less Wind Chill</p>
<p>Wind Chill Warning - Wind chills are expected to drop to -20F or less, with wind speeds around 10 mph or more.</p>		<p>Extreme Cold Weather Watch- 15°F South/10°F North or less Air Temperature OR 15°F South/10°F North or less Wind Chill</p>
<p>NWS New Orleans/Baton Rouge</p>		
		

The temperature and wind chill threshold values are based on climatology and what temperatures impact the local area.

To learn more about this change and more detailed information, be sure to check out our web page (top headline) or read here: <https://www.weather.gov/lix/ColdWeatherChange2024>

Good Read: Revisiting the 2025 Hurricane Season



NOAA's GOES-19 satellite captured images of hurricanes Imelda (left) and Humberto (right) churning off the U.S. East Coast on Sept. 30, 2025. (Image credit: NOAA Satellites)

NOAA wrote a great article recapping the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season (spanning June 1–Nov. 30). This season was “marked by striking contrasts”: overall activity was near normal, but it swung between long quiet stretches and bursts of very intense storms. The basin finished with 13 named storms, 5 hurricanes, and 4 major hurricanes. Thankfully, no system impacted the local area of Louisiana and Mississippi.

Interesting facts / takeaways

- No U.S. hurricane landfalls (first time since 2015).
- The season hit NOAA’s predicted “ballpark”: 13 named storms, 5 hurricanes, 4 majors, consistent with NOAA’s ranges from its August outlook.
- September 10 (the climatological peak) was unusually quiet with no tropical activity.
- Despite the near-normal counts, the Atlantic still produced three Category 5 hurricanes, highlighting the “quiet vs. extreme” contrast.
- Some reporting noted stronger-than-expected wind shear and steering patterns helped keep storms from reaching the U.S., even while the basin still generated high-end hurricanes.

You can read more information about this season from NOAA’s latest news & features page here: <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/2025-atlantic-hurricane-season-marked-by-striking-contrasts>

Storm Spotting Safety Reminders: Your Safety is Number One!



Morton, TX EF-2 Tornado June 5th, 2025. Photo courtesy of Kevin Gilmore

As we continue to see growing interest in SKYWARN storm spotting, and more storm spotters and chasers on the road, please keep safety as the top priority. Follow all traffic laws, don’t stop in travel lanes or on bridges/overpasses, and avoid blocking intersections, shoulders, or driveways. Stay out of the way of first responders and never enter damaged or restricted areas. Keep a safe distance from storms, watch for hazards like downed lines, flooding, and debris. If you can safely do so, report what you see to the NWS with clear details (what/where/when), but if you’re unsure or it’s not safe, don’t take the risk. **Your safety comes first.**

Reporting Procedures:

As always mentioned in our Basic and Advanced courses, there are multiple ways to relay weather reports to the forecasters here at NWS New Orleans/Baton Rouge.

What to Report:

- Hail of ANY size
- Winds greater than 58 mph
- Wind Damage
- Tornadoes, Waterspouts, Funnel Clouds
- Widespread flooding covering roadways or inundating property.

What we need to know:

- **Who you are:**
 - Let us know you are a trained spotter.
- **What you witnessed:**
 - Specific weather event
- **When the event occurred:**
 - NOT the time of the report
- **Where the event occurred:**
 - Direction and distance from your location

Always remember safety!

- Never put yourself in harm's way!
- Keep a safe distance.
- Do not expose yourself to life-threatening weather. Stay sheltered until it passes.
- NEVER get in the way of local rescue officials following a devastating weather event.

Remember, there are multiple ways to report severe weather to us directly!

Call us!

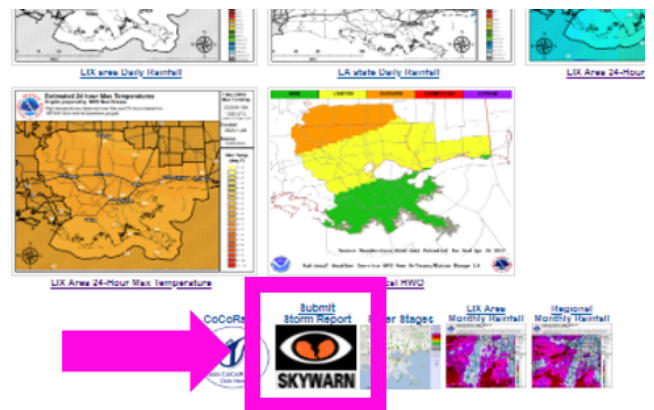
504-522-7330

or: 985-649-0357

Use **Ext 4** to speak with a forecaster on shift.

Through our Website!

Visit www.weather.gov/lix and scroll to the bottom of the page to find the SKYWARN logo with the label "Submit Storm Report"



This will take you to a Google Form to fill out which will transmit your report directly to forecasters on shift!

Through Social Media!



@NWSNewOrleans

Any questions or concerns? Feel free to reach out to us anytime! Give us a call or email us at sr-lix.webmaster@noaa.gov

We plan to continue these newsletter updates annually to bring you the latest updates to the spotter program, as well as new changes in NWS products nationwide or locally here at WFO LIX. Stay tuned!

-Kevin Gilmore
SKYWARN Program Leader
WFO LIX New Orleans/Baton Rouge, LA