



Chicago

2025 Spotter Reference Sheet

What to Report

- **Injuries/Fatalities**
- **Damage**, including:
 - ✓ Trees (snapped? uprooted? what diameter?)
 - ✓ Branches (what diameter?)
 - ✓ Power poles (snapped?)
 - ✓ Structural damage (windows? roofs? walls?)
- **Tornado** (rotation? debris?)
- **Funnel cloud** (rotation?)
- **Wall cloud** (rotation?)
- **Hail** (all sizes)
- **Wind gusts** (40 mph or greater)
- **Heavy rain**, at least:
 - ✓ 1 in over few hours
 - ✓ 2 in over 1-day or more
- **Flooding**, including:
 - ✓ Rivers/streams/creeks out of banks
 - ✓ Swiftly moving water at least 6 in deep
 - ✓ Standing water at least 1-2 ft deep
 - ✓ Water entering structures
 - ✓ Road closures
 - ✓ Mud, rock, or debris flow
 - ✓ Ice jams, levee failures, or dam breaks

How to Report

Report through your local spotter network, or contact NWS direct via spotter phone # (distributed at spotter talk) or:

Web: www.weather.gov/crh/stormreports?sid=lot

Web form: <https://inws.ncep.noaa.gov/report/>

Email: nws.chicago@noaa.gov

Ham Radio: WX9LOT

Facebook: [@NWSChicago](https://www.facebook.com/NWSChicago)

X: [@NWSChicago](https://twitter.com/NWSChicago)

- **Call NWS Chicago spotter # for urgent reports**, such as tornadoes, structural damage, destructive hail, injuries, and flash flooding. Email and social media are great for follow-up information and/or photos/videos!

Tell us:

- ✓ **Who** you are
- ✓ **Where** you are
- ✓ **Where** the weather/damage occurred
- ✓ **When** it occurred
- ✓ **What** weather/damage was observed

Hail Size: Please **DO NOT** report marble sized hail.

Pea = ¼ inch

Mothball = ½ inch

Penny/Dime size = ¾ inch

Nickel size = 0.88 inch

Quarter size = 1 inch *****severe*****

Half Dollar = 1 ¼ inch

Walnut = 1 ½ inch

Golf ball = 1 ¾ inch

Egg = 2 inches

Billiard ball = 2 ¼ inch

Tennis ball = 2 ½ inch

Baseball = 2 ¾ inch

Softball = 4 ½ inch

Estimating Wind Speed

(please give description of damage; the provided wind speed estimate is only for your own reference)

Winds < 60 mph	Trees swaying, twigs and small limbs break, loose, lightweight objects (trash cans, lawn chairs) blown around.
Winds > 60 mph	Medium to large tree limbs downed, sheds, barns and weak structures damaged, truck pushed off the highway.
Winds > 80 mph	Numerous large tree limbs downed, shallow rooted trees pushed over, buildings partially unroofed, farm buildings, weak structures severely damaged.

Flash Flood /Flood

- See reverse side of this sheet

Helpful Internet Links

NWS Chicago Home Page	www.weather.gov/chicago/
Weather Spotter's Field Guide	https://www.weather.gov/media/owlie/SGJune6-11(1).pdf
Online Spotter Training Course	www.meted.ucar.edu/training_course.php?id=23
2025 Spotter Training Certificate	www.weather.gov/media/lot/spotter/weather_certificate.pdf
New! Online Spotter Storymap	https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f645a04c8b634950b713e2d30f642f20

How to Differentiate Flash Flooding and Flooding

Flash Flooding	Flooding
Rapid rise of water into areas where it should not be that requires immediate action to protect life and property	Water where it should not be that can cause damage to property or threat to life that does not fit flash flood criteria
Rapid onset, minutes to hours (Generally less than 6 hours)	Generally slower onset, hours to days (Can also be rapid onset but not flash flooding criteria)
Swiftly moving water: 6 inches deep or more	Moving water: Less than 6 inches deep
Ponded water: Greater than 3 feet deep	Ponded water: Less than 3 feet deep
Reporting Guidelines/Suggestions: Report via phone if flash flooding occurring.	Reporting Guidelines/Suggestions: Report as flooding when estimated depth fits the above. Note whether the flooding is worsening.

Additional Considerations for differentiating Flooding vs. Flash Flooding:

- How quickly did the flooding begin after rainfall started?
Inundation of structures and roadways to the required depth (>6" flowing or >3 ft. standing) is generally considered flash flooding if onset was rapid.
- What types of areas are impacted by the water? Are any roadways or structures impacted?
- What kinds of actions were required to address the flood impacts? Any evacuations? Any road closures?
- Are impacted structures experiencing basement flooding?
Basement/lower-level flooding due to sewer backups and sump pump failures does not count as flooding.
- Is the flooding from a particular stream, river, or waterway?
If we know the name of the stream causing the flood impacts, we can look for additional information (gauge data, reports) related to that stream.

DO NOT endanger your safety! **DO NOT** drive or walk across flooded roads!
Only report when it is safe to do so