

**Chicago**

2026 Spotter Reference Sheet

What to Report

- **Tornado** (must see debris beneath funnel!)
- **Funnel cloud** (must be rotating!)
- **Wall clouds that meet the following criteria:**
 - ✓ Rapid, obvious rotation
 - ✓ Upward motion
 - ✓ Warm inflow going into storm
- **Wind Damage**, including:
 - ✓ Snapped or uprooted trees
 - ✓ Branches, including diameter
 - ✓ Damaged/downed power poles
 - ✓ Structural damage
- **Measured Wind gusts** (45 mph or higher)
 - ✓ If you have a home weather station
- **Hail** (all sizes, see chart below for guide)
- **Flash Flooding and Flooding**
 - ✓ Flash Flooding: Notify us immediately
 - ✓ Flooding: Notify us when convenient

How to report

Remember the Four W's of a Good Spotter Report:

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

How to Make a Report:

Spotter Number: _____
Please only use this number for spotter purposes!

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

Mobile Form: <https://inws.ncep.noaa.gov/report/>

Email: nws.chicago@noaa.gov

Facebook: **US National Weather Service Chicago IL**
 X: **@NWSChicago**

Hail Size Chart

Pea	0.25"	Golf Ball (Considerable)	1.75"
Dime	0.50"	Egg	2.00"
Penny	0.75"	Billiard Ball	2.25"
Nickel	0.88"	Tennis Ball	2.50"
Quarter (Severe Criteria)	1.00"	Baseball (Destructive)	2.75"
Half Dollar	1.25"	Softball	3.75" to 4.00"
Walnut / Ping pong ball	1.50"	Grapefruit	4.75"

Wind Damage Category	Typical Damage
Sub-Severe	Broken twigs and tree branches <3" diameter, intermittent leaf litter on roadways and yards, trash cans and lawn decorations blown around.
Severe	Healthy tree branches 3 to 6" in diameter broken or snapped, widespread leaf litter on roadways and yards, downed fence sections.
Considerable Severe	Healthy trees uprooted, healthy tree branches 6 to 12" in diameter broken or snapped, soffit or shingle damage, outdoor shed or barn roof damage.
Destructive Severe	Healthy trees uprooted or snapped, healthy tree branches >12" in diameter snapped, collapsed barns or sheds, siding ripped off homes, structural roof damage.

Flash Flooding	Flooding
Rapid onset of water, such as flooding of basements, roadways, and retention ponds after thunderstorms.	Gradual onset of water, such as rises in river and creek levels after multiple days of rainfall.

Helpful Links/Bookmarks:

- Spc.noaa.gov (Outlooks, Mesoscale Discussions, Severe Thunderstorm/Tornado Watches)
- Weather.gov/Chicago (Graphical forecasts, Hazardous Weather Outlook, Area Forecast Discussion)

Watch: Be Ready. The ingredients are present for severe weather. (Typical duration of 3-5 hours over large areas).

Warning: Take action! Severe weather is moving into your area. (Typically duration of 30 to 60 minutes for 1-3 counties)

Being a storm spotter does not make you invincible!

Make safe decisions, spot from safe distances, and take cover when threatening weather approaches.