



National Weather Service Sacramento

Weather Spotter Checklist

Things to remember when strong storms are in the area:

1. Make sure you are in a safe place! Your safety is number one and is more important than a real time report. Do not storm chase! In lightning, stay indoors or in a car away from metal/wires. These are the safest locations from lightning, which is one of nature's biggest killers. When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors!
2. Observe from indoors when possible. If a tornado is sighted or a Tornado Warning has been issued, seek shelter in the lowest portion of the house, in an interior room away from windows.
3. Moving flood waters can easily pull a person or a vehicle into danger very quickly. Avoid floodwaters and never attempt to drive through water. Turn Around Don't Drown.
4. Wind can bring down large branches and power lines, which can cause injury or death. Seek shelter indoors and away from windows during strong winds.

If you have observed severe or potential severe weather then:

5. Confirm that the weather conditions are severe or near severe, and could be hazardous to human life and or property. It is not necessary to report lightning unless there are injuries. Consider posting photos and reports on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NWSSacramento or on Twitter at twitter.com/NWSSacramento.
6. Collect your thoughts and fill in the blanks on back of this sheet before calling us. Forecasters are likely to be busy and need a quick, clear, concise report.
7. Call our toll-free spotter line: (Number is unlisted and in your spotter package) . This number is for severe reports only. Call public line 916-979-3051 for forecasts.)
8. Give your name & spotter ID#, plus contact information for forecasters to call back quickly, if additional information is needed. If a relayed report, give that person's information as well.

Examples of good versus bad reports:

Good "My name is John Smith, Spotter ID SA100. I'm 1 mile north of Sacramento on Interstate 5. It's 4:00 pm. Hail up to 1" started 10 minutes ago, around 350 PM and is now covering the ground to 3" deep. This is causing cars to spin out on the Interstate."

Bad "I'm in Sacramento County. We had some hail and it's looking really bad out here. There's a lot of lightning going on."

The first report tells us concisely and precisely what happened, and when and where exactly it did happen. It provides useful and valuable information for us to warn the public.

Common Hail Sizes (Diameter)



<Half inch



.75 inch



.88 inch



1.00 inch



1.25 inch



1.75 inch

Call Spotter Toll-Free Number: (Number is unlisted and in your spotter package) Call 916-979-3051 if you want a routine forecast. Spotter number is for severe reports only.

My name is _____, Spotter ID # _____,

My location is (distance and direction from a city, a well-known roadway if away from home

Here is my report: At _____ am/pm I have spotted (one or more of the following):

- **Tornado:** (funnel extends to the ground, or swirling debris is on the ground below the funnel)
Direction from your location _____, Distance from your location _____ miles away, it is estimated to be impacting location _____ (town, crossroads, etc.)
Touchdown:
 1. It is on the ground and has been for _____ seconds/minutes
 2. It was on the ground for _____ seconds/minutes
- **Funnel Cloud:** (funnel not in contact with the ground and no swirling debris under the funnel)
Direction from your location _____, Distance from your location _____ miles away
- **Wall Cloud:** (rotating lower cloud in contact with the base of a thunderstorm)
Direction from your location _____, Distance from your location _____ miles away
- **Winds:** Direction _____ **Strength:** Measured at _____ mph, or, Estimated at _____ mph
Damage? (Yes or no)
Size of trees or branches down _____ inches/feet
Power lines down (Yes or no)
- **Hail:** Size of largest hailstones _____ (measure in inches, or compared to coins or other objects:
Don't use marble size)
Is hail covering the ground? (Yes or no)
If so, how deep (measure with ruler or estimate)
Impacts to travel on nearby roads, or damage? (Yes or no)
If yes, list impacts _____
- **Flooding:** (Fill in applicable lines)
 1. River or creek overtopping or near top of bank _____ (name of waterway)
 2. Highway or roadway cross streets impacted _____
 3. Water is ponding or flowing (circle one)
 4. Water is rising quickly, slowly, constant, dropping (circle one)
 5. Heavy rain is falling (half an inch or more per hour) and has been measured at _____ inches
- **Snow:** (Fill in applicable lines)
 1. Start time _____ am/pm. End time _____ am/pm.
 2. 24 Hour Total _____ inches (as of 8:00/9:00 am if possible)
 3. Storm Total _____ inches. Is snow sticking to roadway? Is so, how deep _____ inches
 4. Visibility (distance) and/or other impacts of snow on travel on nearby roads _____