

SUNCOAST OBSERVER

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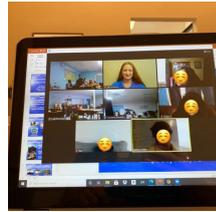
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SKYWARN RECOGNITION DAY 2020



By: Richard Rude

SKYWARN™ Recognition Day was developed in 1999 by the National Weather Service and the American Radio Relay League to celebrate the contributions that SKYWARN™ volunteers make to the NWS mission, the protection of life and property. Normally, radio amateurs take part from home stations or from NWS forecast offices. The goal is for these radio operators to make contact with as many NWS forecast offices as possible during the day. This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions, NWS forecast offices could not host guests. Rather than abandon this great event, the focus shifted this year to having radio operators, from home, contact as many SKYWARN™ trained spotters as possible, and also utilize Facebook and Twitter.

The event officially ran 24 hours, from 7 pm Fri. Dec 4th to 7 pm Sat. Dec 5th. During that time, various live streams were in place on Facebook, such as a visit to the Storm Prediction Center (SPC) in Norman, OK. Here at the Tampa Bay National Weather Service, in addition to posting on Facebook and Twitter, two local amateur radio “nets” contacted SKYWARN™ spotters, 54 here in Florida and 1 in Wisconsin.

Record Breaking Atlantic Hurricane Season



By: Dan Noah

The extremely active 2020 Atlantic hurricane season ended with a record-breaking 30 named storms and 12 landfalling storms in the continental United States. The 2020 season ran out of storm names and had to borrow nine names from the Greek Alphabet. The only other hurricane season to run out of names was in 2005 when there were 28 storms.

This is the fifth consecutive year with an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season, with 18 above-normal seasons out of the past 26. This increased hurricane activity is attributed to the warm phase of the Atlantic Multi-Decadal Oscillation (AMO) — which began in 1995 — and has favored more, stronger, and longer-lasting storms since that time. Such active eras for Atlantic hurricanes have historically lasted about 25 to 40 years. An average season has 12 named storms, six hurricanes, and three major hurricanes.

Great American Teach-In Goes Virtual



By: Jen Hubbard

The Great American Teach-In (GATI) is an event that the National Weather Service Tampa Bay Area has been heavily involved in for a very long time. We get requests starting at the very beginning of the school year and dedicate as many employees as possible to speaking at schools as we are able to schedule through the day, sometimes even spreading it over two days or delaying talks with schools until later in the year to correspond with their weather unit. But with the pandemic, this year we weren't sure what would happen with our outreach activities. Thankfully, virtual options allowed our normal GATI activities to continue along with reaching even more students throughout the school year.

For the GATI, both Dustin and Jennifer spoke with entire 4th grade classes. Done virtually, Dustin connected with over 150 students at Collins Elementary, and Jennifer with over 80 at Gibsonton Elementary, with students who are in the classroom as well as those who are learning from home. Jennifer again did this with about 100 students at Palma Sola Elementary's 5th grade as they started their weather unit mid-December. Stephen and Keily have been able to connect with over 500 students at schools both locally and across the nation throughout this school year. As part of a national school outreach team, Stephen spoke with schools from here to Boston to Georgia to Arizona.

Tampa Bay Incident Meteorologist Provides Decision Support Services to 2020 California Wildfires



By: Rick Davis

Rick Davis provided on-site Incident Meteorologist (IMET) and Impact-Based Decision Support Services at the August Complex Wildfire in North Central California in September and then at the Red Salmon Wildfire Complex in Northwestern California dispatched in October. Rick worked with numerous incident command teams from different multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional teams ranging in complexity levels. Critical and specific weather forecasts, numerous briefings, weather updates, alerts, and warnings were provided to thousands of partners from a wide variety of Federal, State, and local responders, fire crews, operations personnel, military, private cooperators, and land owners.

Numerous challenges were overcome during these wildfire assignments from extreme fire behavior during easterly wind events with gusts to over 50 mph, Red Flag Warnings, large fire size, and complex terrain. The record California wildfire season was further complicated during the COVID 19 pandemic safety protocols. The August Complex eventually became the largest wildfire in California history burning nearly 1 million acres; this produced significant media attention, structure loss and injuries, along with smoke producing poor and unhealthy air quality impacting large populations in the region daily.

