

National Weather Service Fact Sheet

The North Texas SKYWARN Program



What is SKYWARN?

SKYWARN is a network of trained storm spotters who make observations when storms threaten their communities. Spotters report visual and environmental clues, which suggest that the storm in their area may be a candidate to produce severe weather. Storm spotters also provide ground-truth reports of severe weather impacts and damage reports after a storm has struck.

Why do we need spotters? Isn't radar good enough by itself?

With the recent advances in radar and computer technology, radar systems allow us to see storms in ways never before possible. However, radar cannot and does not tell the whole story of what's going on in and around a storm. Only by combining the radar data with the spotter reports and the analysis skills of the meteorologist can we issue the best possible warnings and statements.



Who are SKYWARN storm spotters?

Amateur radio operators make up the backbone of the SKYWARN spotter network. In some communities and counties, law enforcement and fire officials serve effectively as storm spotters. Public utilities workers, electric and telephone crews, and city/county employees may also serve as storm spotters, along with interested members of the general public. Effective spotter groups typically have a strong sense of community service, fast and efficient communications networks, and ability to observe and report on storms when and where the spotters are needed.

How can I become a SKYWARN spotter?

There are three primary steps involved in becoming a spotter. First, if you are not a law or fire official, obtain your amateur radio license. Many amateur radio clubs across north Texas offer classes for those interested in becoming licensed. Second, attend one of the NWS SKYWARN spotter training programs. This will provide you with the observational knowledge you need. Third, become integrated into the spotter network in your area.

For more information on SKYWARN in north Texas, visit the NWS Fort Worth/Dallas Forecast Office's web site at: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/fwd>