

# Packerland Weather News



Volume 7, Issue 2

Fall/Winter 2008

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## NWS Green Bay Hosts Open House

By Jeff Last, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, and  
Linda Skowronski, Administrative Support Assistant  
NWS Green Bay

Partly sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s greeted visitors to the first-ever public open house at the National Weather Service office in Green Bay. About 450 people from all across Wisconsin took advantage of the good weather to learn more about the NWS and meet the staff that provides forecasts and warnings to 22 counties in northeast and north-central Wisconsin.

There was plenty to do when visitors arrived. Tours of the facility were held during the entire event and included a presentation about the NWS, an explanation of how severe weather warnings and forecasts are put together for dissemination to the public, and a close-up view of the equipment that generates the Doppler radar's beam. Outside the office, there were various hands-on weather activities for kids and exhibits detailing the wide range of services the NWS provides.

Several volunteer cooperative (COOP) weather observers were recognized for their service to the NWS. The COOP awards ceremony also brought together the oldest (at age 93) and youngest (age 9) weather observers in the NWS Green Bay service area. (See article on page 7 for a story on the awards.)

One of the highlights of the open house was the weather balloon launches. Visitors had the rare opportunity to watch a real radiosonde and balloon ascend into the atmosphere. These "upper air" observations, which are normally collected twice a day (at 5 AM and 5 PM CST), provide critical weather data to meteorologists.



NWS Green Bay Hydrometeorological Technician Scott Cultice launches a weather balloon for dozens of onlookers. For more photos, go to page 2 of the newsletter. All open house photos by Peg Zenko.

Also as part of the festivities, four raffle prizes were awarded to the following individuals:

NOAA Weather Radio—Richard E. of Greenville  
Rain Gauge—Julie D. of Green Bay  
Snow Gauge—Bob K. of Green Bay  
NOAA T-Shirt—Karen P. of New London

The staff of the National Weather Service office in Green Bay thoroughly enjoyed interacting with the visitors to the open house and would like to thank all in attendance that day.

## Comments or Suggestions?

If you have suggestions for articles, have comments about the newsletter, or would like to be removed from the mailing list, please contact us at:

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or by e-mail: [jeff.last@noaa.gov](mailto:jeff.last@noaa.gov)



# The NWS Green Bay Open House Photo Album



## NWS Green Bay Forecaster Receives Cline Award

By Linda S. Skowronski,

Administrative Support Assistant, NWS Green Bay

Forecaster Roy Eckberg received the 2008 Isaac M. Cline Award this past August in the category of meteorology. The award was presented at the local office level with winners having the potential to advance to the regional and national level.

Eckberg was nominated by his co-workers for dedicated and enthusiastic work in the climate services program. He has spent many hours reviewing, and sometimes correcting, old climate records to provide accurate information to office staff and our customers. Eckberg also led a project to research and verify snowfall data from the late 1880s, using all resources available to substantiate the records.

The prestigious award is named in honor of Isaac M. Cline, one of the most recognized employees in weather service history. Cline made numerous contributions to the mission of what was then called the Weather Bureau. His most noteworthy



*MIC Gary Austin (left) presents the Cline award to forecaster Roy Eckberg.*

accomplishment was the actions he took during the Galveston hurricane of 1900, the deadliest weather event in U.S. history. The Cline Award is presented annually to NWS staff in nine categories of accomplishment.

Congratulations on a job well done!

## Special Thanks to All of Our Volunteers

By Gary Austin, Meteorologist-in-Charge

NWS Green Bay

NOAA's National Weather Service in Green Bay greatly appreciates our volunteer weather observers and spotters for their selfless personal dedication in taking observations and reporting them to us. Our volunteers include cooperative observers, hazardous weather spotters, and amateur radio operators ("hams"). The hams not only serve as spotters but also relay important information to our office about on-going hazardous weather, as an integral part of our weather warning operations. Last but not least, three hams actually volunteer their personal time directly at our station during summer severe weather operations—this could be at any time of day—serving as our "receivers of information" relayed from other hams in the field!

Weather spotters, after learning or refreshing their knowledge of hazardous

weather spotting at our spring training talks, assist us during significant weather events, in real-time in any season of the year, providing us with information about hazardous weather. Although we have much high-technology equipment, like radars and satellites, we still rely on observers' eyes to let us know what is truly happening "on the ground" so we can make appropriate warning decisions.

Without the volunteer service of our observers, spotters and hams, we could not provide the valuable services expected of us by our tax-paying community. Thank you very much!



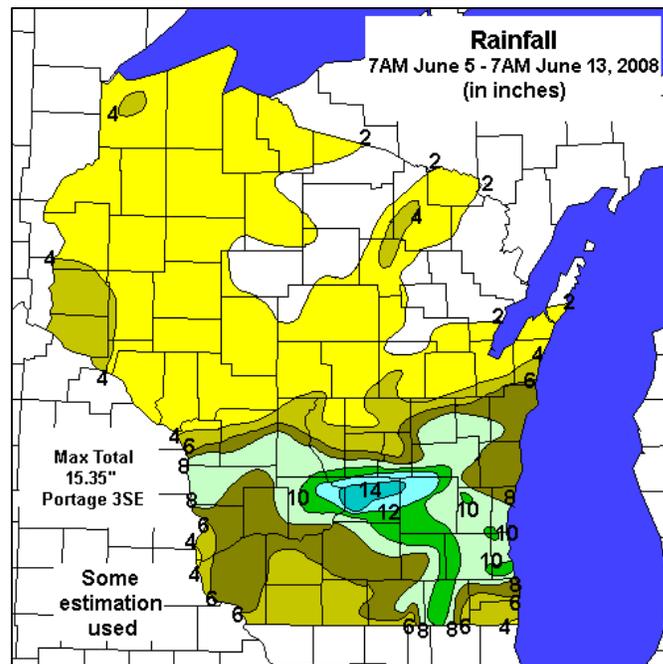
## June Flooding Hits Large Part of Wisconsin

By Jeff Last, Warning Coordination Meteorologist  
NWS Green Bay

Days of heavy rain caused extreme flooding across parts of southern and central Wisconsin in June 2008. The record flooding across the state during the first half of the month was the result of a nearly perfect meteorological set-up for excessive rainfall. Thunderstorms and tropical moisture were plentiful from June 5 through June 8 across the area as a stationary front stalled over southern Wisconsin. Copious amounts of moisture streamed north into the region from the Gulf of Mexico and slammed into the stationary boundary, which acted as the focus for thunderstorms and heavy rain. As a result, storms formed, reformed, and repeatedly moved over the same areas. Rainfall quickly accumulated and flooding was soon to follow.

On June 12, after a four day reprieve, thunderstorms formed once again, this time ahead of a cold front that pushed across the state. Additional flooding occurred as storms produced heavy rain on already saturated ground.

Rainfall totals from June 5 through June 12 across parts of central and southern Wis-



*Rainfall for the eight day period ending the morning of June 13.*

consin ranged from 4 to 15 inches. As a result of the rain and flooding, over a half billion dollars in damage was reported in the state.

## Are You Ready for Another Wisconsin Winter?

The warm days of summer are long gone, and now is the time to prepare for the upcoming winter season. Last winter, much of Wisconsin experienced record snowfall and numerous winter storms. Get ready for this season by putting together a winter storm safety plan for you and your family:

- Check and winterize your vehicle before the winter season begins.
- Have a NOAA Weather Radio with a battery back-up to keep up-to-date on the latest weather situation.
- Store extra food that requires no cooking, in the event electricity is cut off.
- Make sure your emergency heating source, such as a fireplace or space heater, has proper ventilation.

- Check the weather forecast before leaving for extended periods outdoors.

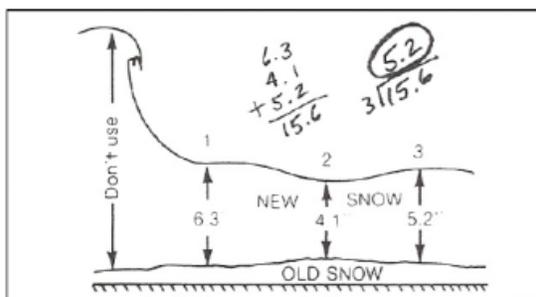
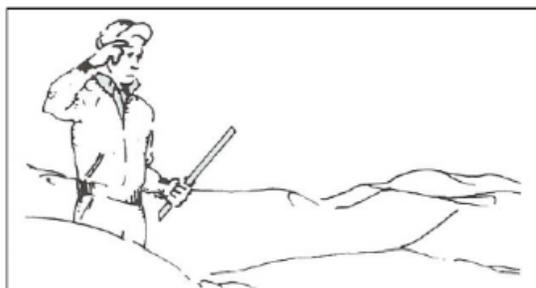
When traveling, carry a winter storm survival kit that includes blankets, a flashlight with extra batteries, a first-aid kit, high-calorie non-perishable food, a shovel and knife, a windshield scraper and brush, and booster cables. Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. If you must travel in a winter storm, avoid traveling alone.



## Storm Spotters: It's Time to Get Out the Yardsticks

Last winter, with its near record snowfall across parts of northeast Wisconsin, proved how important storm spotters are during severe winter weather. Your timely reports during and after winter storms provided important information to National Weather Service forecast staff, which resulted in more accurate warnings and advisories. Before you know it, arctic cold and snow will return to the area. Your accurate snowfall measurements will again be needed this season.

It is important to measure snowfall (and snow depth) in locations where the effects of blowing and drifting are minimized. Finding a good location where snow accumulates uniformly simplifies all other aspects of the observation and reduces the opportunities for error. In open areas where wind-blown snow cannot be avoided, several measurements will be necessary to obtain an average depth—these measurements should not include the largest drifts. In heavily forested locations, find an exposed clearing in the trees. Measurements beneath trees are inaccurate since large amounts of snow can accumulate on trees and never reach the ground. Avoid measuring directly on the grass; rather, use a snowboard or other hard surface away



from the house. Make sure the snowboard is well cleared after your final measurement.

Snowfall should be reported in tenths of an inch (for example, 3.9 inches). Official spotters can call in their reports to the NWS at any time using the toll-free hotline or send them via eSpotter, linked on the NWS Green Bay website:

[www.weather.gov/grb](http://www.weather.gov/grb)

## New Forecaster Joins NWS Green Bay Staff

Mike Cellitti joined the staff of the Green Bay Weather Forecast Office as a General Forecaster on October 28. He accepted the position vacated by Phil Kurimski who transferred to the NWS office near Detroit.

Prior to coming to NWS Green Bay, Cellitti was a meteorologist-intern at the NWS office in Gaylord, Michigan, where he started in June 2005.

Cellitti is a native of Arlington Heights, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. He graduated from the University of Illinois with a Masters Degree in Meteorology.

His main interest in meteorology is winter storms. Outside the office, Cellitti enjoys tennis, racquetball, baseball, and curling.



New NWS Green Bay forecaster Mike Cellitti.

## Upper Air System Advances into the 21st Century

By Scott A. Cultice, Hydrometeorological Technician  
NWS Green Bay

The morning of October 2, 2008, marked the end of an era for the upper air program here at NWS Green Bay. For more than 53 years, upper air balloon launches were done using the old “Automatic Radio Theodolite” (ART) tracking system. ART was based on World War II technology but had a few upgrades over the years. One of those upgrades took place back in the mid-1980s, when the old transistor tubes were replaced with solid state components.

After a nearly two week lull in October for installation and testing, upper air observations once again started at NWS Green Bay using a new and improved system called the Radiosonde Replacement System (RRS). The new radiosonde, like the old instrument package, still measures temperature, relative humidity and pressure, and transmits the data back to the office using a radio signal.

Data are still obtained by launching a balloon with an attached radiosonde twice a day, but the RRS will allow us to acquire more accurate information more efficiently using a GPS-based tracking system. Improved wind accuracy and one second data resolution are just a few of the improvements with the new system.

Other benefits of the RRS include lower maintenance, which equates to less downtime. The RRS also performs several self tests to detect small problems. These upgrades will cut down on the number of missing flights due to ground equipment failures.

There are 92 National Weather Service sites, 69 in the continental U.S., simultane-



Workers installed a new tracking antenna on top of the weather balloon inflation building. In addition to the new system, the building underwent an exterior face-lift.



The new GPS radiosonde is about half the size of the older instrument. It stands six inches tall.

ously sending these radiosondes up into the atmosphere gathering important weather data for today's and tomorrow's forecast.

### Did You Know?

Wisconsin averages about one large snowstorm each winter that produces at least 20 inches of snow. The most recent occurred February 5-6, 2008, as a major winter storm impacted the southeast half of the state. The snow was accompanied by

high winds and thunder and lightning. Snowfall amounts of 16 to 21 inches were reported near Janesville, Port Washington, and Milwaukee. A major traffic backup occurred on Interstate 39/90 south of Madison, where nearly 2,000 cars were stranded.

## The Cooperative Observer Corner

By Pat Hein, Observations Program Leader,  
NWS Green Bay

During the 2008 NWS Green Bay open house held September 27, John Caskey, one of our wisest and most experienced observers at 93 years young, met with our youngest coop observer, 9 year old Mark Steinhaus. One of the pointers John gave to Mark included to “stay home a lot.” Mark and many other coop observers were on hand to honor John Caskey who received the Helmet Landsberg award for over six decades of service as a coop observer.

Caskey started taking observations back in 1948 as part of his duties as dam tender of the Lac Vieux Desert dam. Since that time, he has measured over 2,000 inches of precipitation and more than 7,000 inches of snowfall, a miraculous feat in the Lake Superior Snow Belt region. In his NWS career, he has already received the prestigious Benjamin Franklin and John Campanius Holm awards.

The Helmet Landsberg award was presented in front of a large gathering at the open house. Caskey’s wife Stella, as well as his daughter, granddaughter, and great-granddaughter, were present for this award. His 6 year old great-granddaughter sat on his lap and said, “Grandpa, I’m proud of you!” This brought a smile to everyone’s face.

Caskey had to walk back a half a mile into the dam location every winter until this last year and has some interesting stories. Just last month, he noticed a brush wolf (which is all brown and a cross between a coyote and timber wolf) lying in the road to the dam. Thinking it was dead, he went to pick it up and move it off the road. To his surprise, the wolf was alive and snarled at him. Thankfully, Caskey vacated the area safely. It is rugged country when your snow shoe straps break with three feet of snow to walk through. It was a long crawl and trek back to the truck for Caskey that day. The road back to the dam is now plowed during the winter, which makes it a lot easier and safer for him.



Volunteer weather observers Mark Steinhaus (left) and John Caskey at the NWS Green Bay open house.



Pat Hein with John Caskey with the Helmet Landsberg award.  
Photos by Peg Zenko.

Mark Steinhaus, our youngest observer, is the grandson of Dick and Sue Steinhaus, our coop observers from Crivitz High Falls. Dick, a retired WPS supervisor, worked and took observations at the High Falls Dam which was one of the original coop sites for High Falls. While Mark has a lot to learn about observing and life, he has two very good teachers to learn from.

To all of you, have a happy holiday season and best wishes for the New Year. If you have any questions on winter observations, feel free to contact me at 800-788-6883 or e-mail me at [pat.hein@noaa.gov](mailto:pat.hein@noaa.gov).

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The **Packerland Weather News**  
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## Packerland Weather News



## Storm Spotter Training in 2009

The National Weather Service relies on a group of volunteers who, during severe weather, keep an eye on the sky for their community. Their observations, in concert with NWS Doppler radar analysis, allows meteorologists to make decisions on the severity of thunderstorms and other types of significant weather.

Severe weather spotters attend annual training given by the NWS each spring. The 90 minute seminar concentrates on the identification of significant cloud features that are associated with severe weather and weather safety. Spotters also learn how to measure snow, estimate hail size and wind speed, and how to report this information to the NWS.

The schedule of classes for 2009 will be posted on the NWS Green Bay website later this winter. The classes, which are free to the public, are usually held from March to May.



Storm spotters watching a tornado near Bismarck, ND, taken November 1, 2000. Photo by Pat Whitlock, KOTVS.



On the Web

[www.weather.gov/grb/skywarn](http://www.weather.gov/grb/skywarn)