

The Wilmington Wave

National Weather Service, Wilmington, NC

VOLUME IV, ISSUE II

SPRING 2015



2015 Atlantic Hurricane Season Begins June 1st!

The 2015 Atlantic Hurricane Season has officially begun! If you haven't done so already, now is the perfect time to make sure that you and your family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors are ready if a tropical system affects are area. Do you have enough food and water for each person in your household for a few days? Do you have the medications you may need or enough food for a pet? Also, don't forget people whom are elderly and disabled, that may need extra care for as well. Aside from preparation, are you aware of the difference between a 'WATCH' and a 'WARNING'? Do you know all the hazards that can develop in lieu of a tropical system? Hint: Storm Surge, Rip Currents, Tornadoes, and flooding, just to name a few! Visit the website below for important safety information!

Website: www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare



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[@NWSWilmingtonNC](https://twitter.com/NWSWilmingtonNC)

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2015 Atlantic Hurricane Season Tropical Cyclone Names

Ana	Henri	Odette
Bill	Ida	Peter
Claudette	Joaquin	Rose
Danny	Kate	Sam
Erika	Larry	Teresa
Fred	Mindy	Victor
Grace	Nicholas	Wanda



New RAWs Installed in Horry County, SC

- Josh Weiss

On Thursday, April 23, 2015, Josh Weiss from the National Weather Service in Wilmington joined four members of the South Carolina Forestry Commission (SCFC) to install a new Remote Automated Weather System (RAWS) near Conway, SC. A RAWs is a piece of equipment with several sensors that measure different weather parameters important to forecasting fire behavior. This is the second RAWs installed in northeast South Carolina in the past year; one was deployed in Marion, SC in 2014.



SCFC foresters installing the anemometer on the Conway RAWs



Conway RAWs after installation

As mentioned above, a RAWs measures several different parameters pertinent to fire weather and prediction of fire behavior. These include temperature, dew point temperature, 20-foot wind speed and direction, rainfall, and 10-hour fuel moisture. These are all important to predicting wildland fire behavior because strong winds, combined with high temperatures and low relative humidity, create an environment favorable to extreme fire growth. The only way to know the environment is to have current and reliable observations. This is the importance of having a RAWs.

Although there are many other weather-reporting stations in the area, including Automated Surface Observing Stations (ASOS), Automated Weather Observing Stations (AWOS) and private mesonet sites, none of these report fuel moisture. The RAWs is the only one with a fuel stick. This is important because fuel moisture is a critical aspect to wildland fire behavior. Large wildfires require dry fuels (generally less than 10% moisture) and even if a certain day is very hot, dry, and windy, fires are not likely to get out of control unless fuels are dry. This fuel moisture is also incorporated into daily fuel moisture maps, which help determine large wildfire potential on a national scale.



There are many RAWS across North Carolina and South Carolina, but more are always needed. What may surprise many is that Horry County leads the entire state in terms of large wildfire frequency. As recently as 2013 a wildfire destroyed many homes in the Windsor Green community of Horry County, and the Highway 31 Fire in 2009 is remembered as the most destructive wildfire in South Carolina history. However, eastern Horry County has a long history of significant wildfires including:

Bombing Range Fire, 1954: 10,000 acres

Socastee Plantation Fire, 1967: 6,000 acres

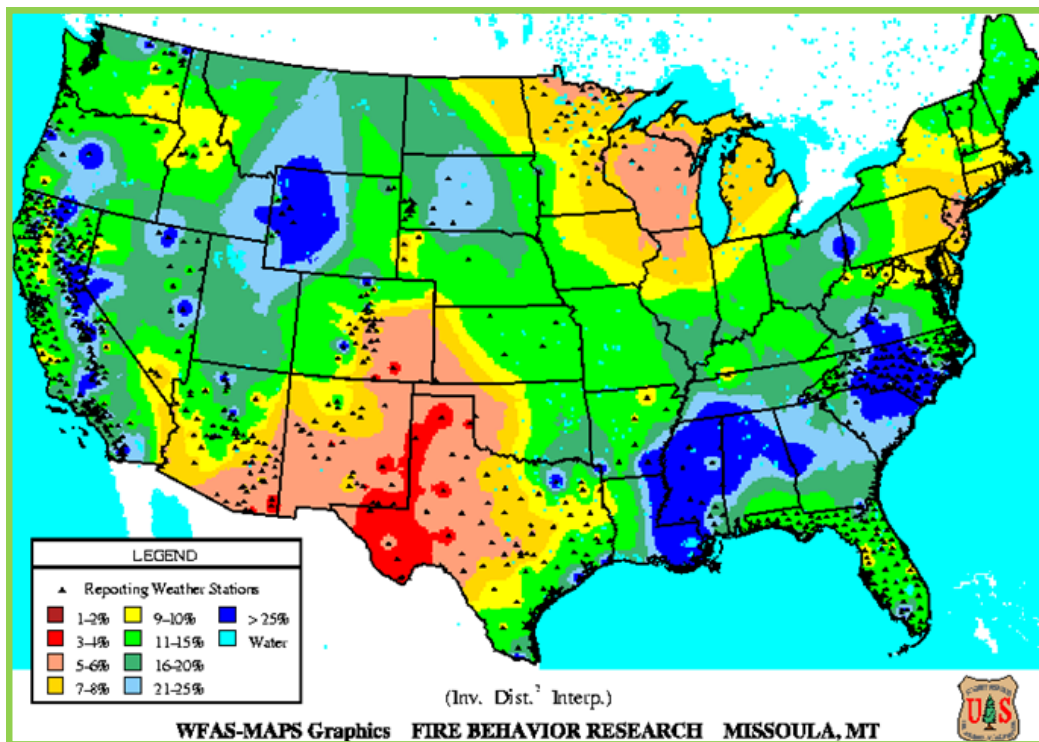
Clear Pond Fire, 1976: 30,000 acres*

Legends Fire, 2002: 1,700 acres

Highway 31 Fire, 2009: 19,000 acres**

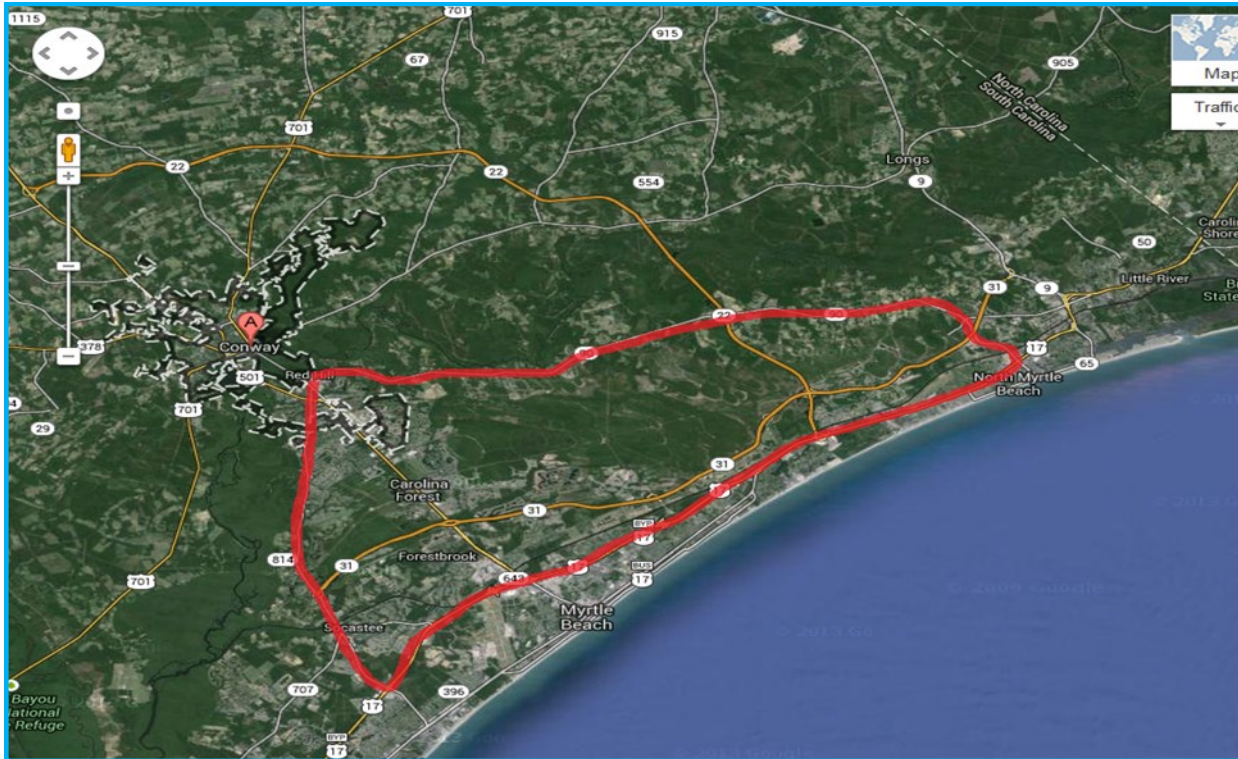
(*largest wildfire in SC history. **costliest wildfire in SC history)

RAWS fuel stick to simulate 10-hour fuel moisture



Example of a daily 10-hour fuel moisture map interpolating RAWS data

This is just a small list of the wildfires that have occurred in eastern Horry County, and all of them have taken place in the same general area, a region known as the Buist Tract. The Buist Tract has a long history of wildfires because it is in a region with favorable weather conditions and an increased percentage of Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) where businesses and residences border forest land. Clearly, having a RAWS installed here is crucial to maintaining a constant weather watch on fire conditions, which will hopefully limit the damage caused by future wildfires.



Map of eastern Horry County. Buist Tract circled in red.

Additionally, having a local RAWS will aid foresters and forecasters alike during prescribed burns in the area, which are used to reduce fuel loading and promote hazard reduction within the WUI. In other words, not only will having this RAWS aid in fighting wildfires, but will also help to reduce the number and intensity of them due to better prescribed burning.

Having a RAWS installed is a very important step to increasing public awareness and safety in areas prone to wildfires. It could be argued that the one now in place near the Buist Tract is the most important in all of South Carolina. While it is likely that more RAWS will be installed across the state in the future, none of them will be placed in a location with as significant of a wildfire history as the one in Conway. This installation was a major step forward to improving fire weather forecasts and wildland fire safety across northeast South Carolina.

Rip Currents : Stay Safe at the Beach

What are rip currents?

Rip currents are narrow, rapid flows of water directed away from shore that develop at beaches with breaking waves. As the waves create a build-up of excess water near the shoreline, rip currents may develop in channels between sandbars (Figure 1). Rip currents are fairly common at our local beaches, and some days they are too weak to pose a significant hazard. However, strong rip currents can travel at speeds over 5 mph – which is faster than an Olympic swimmer!

Image of rip current.



What should I do if I'm caught in a rip current?

Do NOT try to swim against the rip current – this will only exhaust you. Instead, swim parallel to the shoreline in order to escape the narrow current (Figure 2). Once you escape the rip, swim back to shore at an angle away from the current. If you become exhausted, tread water and wave/yell to get the attention of people onshore.

What if someone else at the beach gets caught in a rip current?

The best course of action is to immediately notify a lifeguard, as they are trained and equipped to rescue swimmers in distress. Sadly, some rip current victims end up being good citizens who try to rescue others without taking proper floatation devices to ensure their own safety. This highlights the importance of swimming in areas monitored by lifeguards.

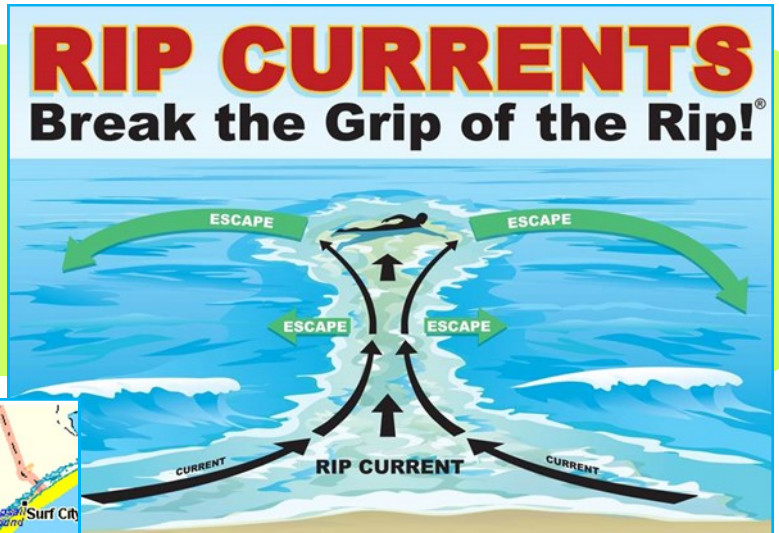
How can I swim safely at the beach?

Remember to NEVER swim alone at the beach. Always try to swim in areas monitored by a lifeguard. Heed the warning flags, signs, and verbal commands of lifeguards and local law enforcement. Avoid swimming near jetties and piers, as rip currents commonly develop near these structures. Don't swim in the ocean at night.

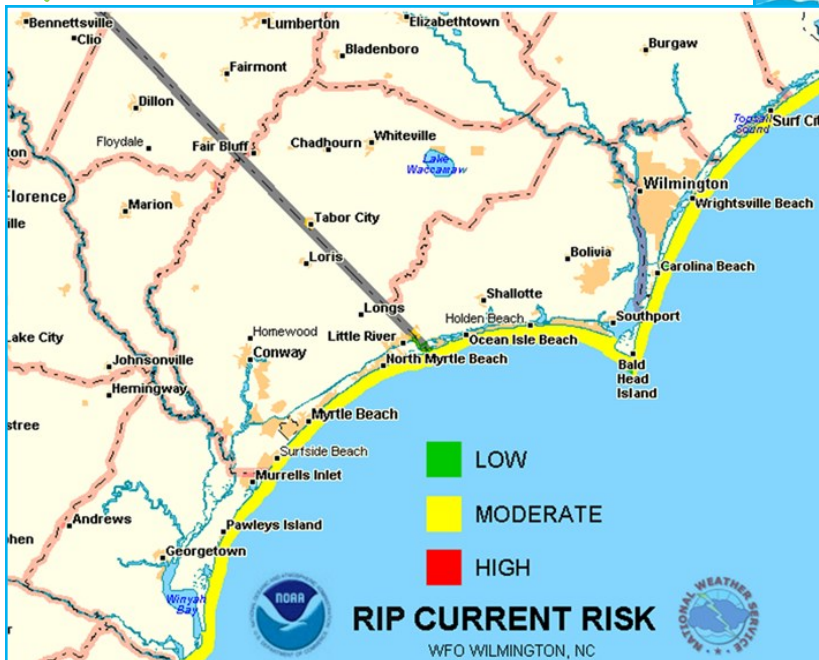
Where can I find beach and rip current forecasts?

The National Weather Service in Wilmington, NC provides daily surf zone and rip current forecasts for our North and South Carolina beaches beginning in April. This includes a daily rip current risk forecast of “low”, “moderate”, or “high”. All beachgoers should know the risk of rip currents before they get into the water. Please visit our Beach and Rip Current website <http://www.weather.gov/ilm/BeachRip> for the daily forecast and additional information.

First and foremost, wave your hands for help for lifeguards or bystanders to see help. Remain calm. Swim parallel to shore (green arrows) and then diagonal towards shore in order to escape the narrow rip current.



An example rip current risk forecast graphic issued daily by the NWS Wilmington NC office.



For more safety information, visit www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov

Calling all local weather enthusiasts!! Did you know that there’s a new local chapter of the American Meteorological Society & National Weather Association chapter?! The Coastal Carolinas AMS/NWA chapter is fairly new, as they were founded in 2013. The group is comprised of National Weather Service, media, and private sector meteorologists, as well as local area students, retirees, and weather enthusiasts. From Myrtle Beach, SC to Wilmington, NC, the chapter is gradually growing, and while a majority of their interests lie within this area, anyone across the Carolinas is welcome. Anyone with an interest in weather is encouraged to attend and participate as meetings are held throughout the year across the area.



For more information at the chapter, as well as upcoming meeting information, visit:

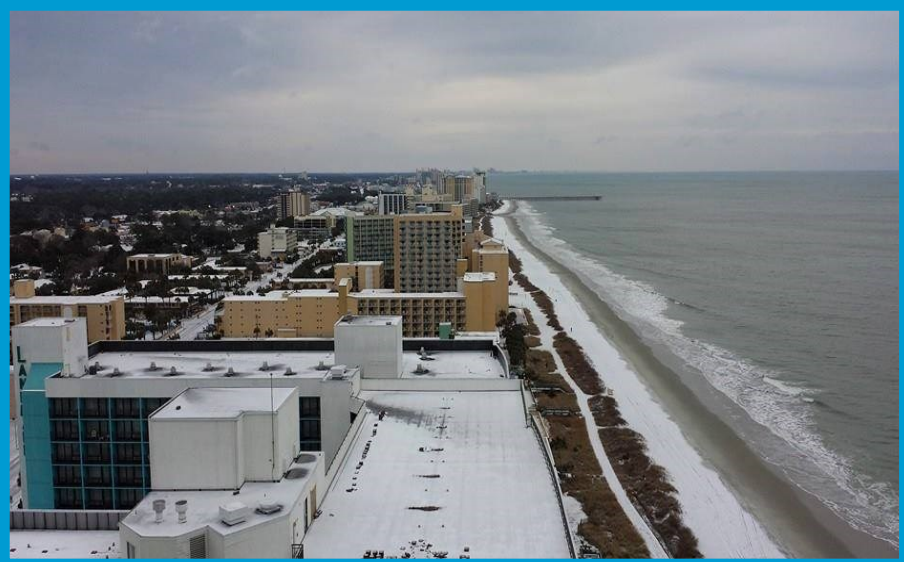
www.ametsoc.org/chapters/coastalcarolinas

Snowfall Databases Now Available from the 1940's

- Tim Armstrong

Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Myrtle Beach, SC had never had a long, systematic snowfall record. After examining snowfall measurements from FAA and U.S. Air Force records at the Myrtle Beach airport, local NWS cooperative observer records at various locations around Myrtle Beach, and unofficial reports from newspapers and the public, we have been able to thread together an unofficial snowfall climatology for Myrtle Beach dating back to 1940. Although not *official* in a legal sense, this snowfall record helps fill a gap in our understanding of the frequency and severity of wintry weather in South Carolina.



Snow is an infrequent occurrence along the South Carolina coast. The combination of cold air and moisture is difficult to achieve since winds bringing moisture in from the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico are almost always bringing warmth in as well. Of the snowfall events in Myrtle Beach's history one stands out as particularly severe; December 22-24, 1989, the Christmas Coastal Snowstorm (www.weather.gov/ilm/ChristmasSnow1989), brought an immense snowstorm to the coastal Southeast including 14 inches in Myrtle Beach. Other significant snowstorms include 7 inches on March 24-25, 1983, and 9 inches on February 9-11, 1973.

Earliest Measurable Snow:	December 11, 1958
Latest Measurable Snow:	March 25, 1983

Basic Snowfall Statistics for Myrtle Beach, SC since 1940

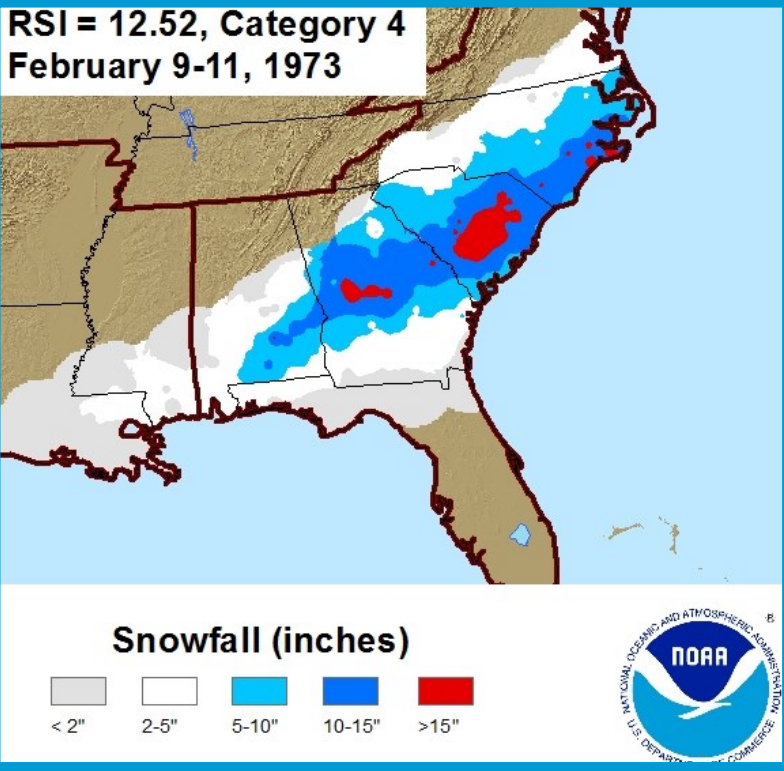
Total Snowfall (inches)	76.9
Annual Mean Snowfall (in.)	1.0
Standard Deviation per event	3.0
Median Snowstorm Total (in.)	1.0
Mode (inches)	1.0

For more information, visit:

www.weather.gov/ilm/ILM/MYRsnowfallDatabase

Florence, South Carolina

RSI = 12.52, Category 4
February 9-11, 1973



An official record of snowfall was maintained from 1948 until 1999 by weather observers at the Florence Regional Airport. An ASOS (Automated Surface Observing System) was installed and activated in Florence on May 1, 1999, ending the official record for snowfall observations. However with the help of WBTW meteorologist Frank Johnson, we have been able to reconstruct an *unofficial* extension to this snowfall record from 1999 to the present. Summarized data and a listing of all snowfall events in Florence are presented below. This extension of the snowfall record in Florence, SC is not official in a legal sense, but helps provide a continuing record of the number and size of snowstorms throughout Florence's history.

The largest snowstorm in Florence, South Carolina's history occurred February 9-10, 1973 when 17 inches was measured at the Florence Regional Airport. This storm dumped crippling amounts of snow from southern Alabama across Georgia and the Carolinas. (see map to the right)

Earliest Measurable Snow:	December 11, 1958
Latest Measurable Snow:	March 25, 1971

Total Snowfall (inches)	130.0
Annual Mean Snowfall (in.)	1.9
Standard Deviation per event	3.1
Median Snowstorm Total (in.)	1.5
Mode (inches)	1.0

For more information, visit:

www.weather.gov/ilm/FLOsnowfallDatabase

For information about Wilmington, NC's Snowfall Database:

www.weather.gov/ilm/ILMsnowfallDatabase

2015 East Coast Hurricane Awareness Tour Comes to Myrtle Beach, SC

- Sandy LaCorte

On Wednesday, May 6th, the 2015 East Coast Hurricane Awareness Tour landed in Myrtle Beach, SC for one day. On board the U.S. Air Force Reserve WC-130J hurricane hunter aircraft and the NOAA G-IV aircraft was National Hurricane Center (NHC) director, Dr. Rick Knabb, along with hurricane specialists John Cangialosi and Daniel Brown, and NOAA and U.S. Air Force hurricane experts, researchers and military air crew. Record-breaking media representatives, along with visitors, which included school children, ROTC groups, members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, Coastal Carolinas American Meteorological Society & National Weather Association members, and the general public, had a chance to tour these aircraft and speak with the men and women who fly into tropical systems to better research efforts and aid in weather forecasting. In addition, a Black Hawk helicopter along with several booths were in attendance, including the American Red Cross, National Weather Service (from Wilmington, NC and Charleston, SC), and local Emergency Management just to name a few.

The U.S. Air Force Reserve WC-130J is only one of a total of ten aircraft, from the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, 403rd Wing, which will fly directly through the eye of a hurricane numerous times on one flight. Centrally located in Biloxi, MS, these aircraft are vital to tropical system forecasting and research as the data they collect is directly transmitted via satellite to the National Hurricane Center, located in Miami, FL. This information is then used in the forecasting process, and can provide valuable information including storm system track and strength.

The NOAA G-IV, operated and managed by the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, is based at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL. Used for both operational and research purposes, this specialized aircraft flies above tropical cyclones, both around and ahead of it, collecting data that is utilized by hurricane forecast models.

We hope you were able to make it this year! See you next time!



*Wilmington, NC meteorologists in front of
USAF Hurricane Hunter Plane C-130*

Left to right: Christina Anthony: WWAY-TV
Sandy LaCorte: NWS Wilmington NC
Lauren Rautenkranz: WECT-TV



*Deaf and Hard of Hearing community learns about
what the USAF Hurricane Hunters do.*

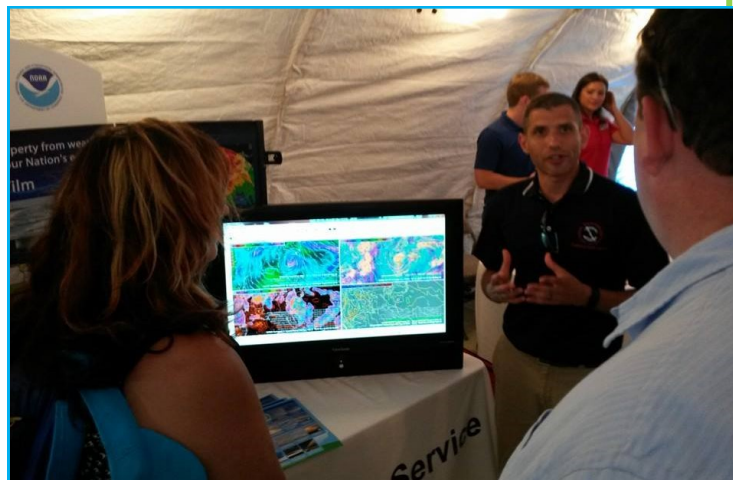


NOAA G-IV Aircraft "Gonzo"

United States Air Force WC-130J Aircraft



Julie Packett and Emily Timte (NWS Charleston SC) show visitors different equipment used to observe weather conditions



John Quagliariello (NWS Charleston SC) speaks to visitors about tropical disturbance, which eventually becomes T.S. Ana

A look inside the NOAA G-IV Aircraft



Steve Pfaff (NWS Wilmington NC Warning Coordination Meteorologist) speaks with National Hurricane Center specialists Daniel Brown and John Cangialosi



Lightning

...what you should know and best practices to stay safe!

Lightning occurs with all thunderstorms and is what defines a thunderstorm. Over the course of one year, the earth will be struck by lightning nearly 20 million times. Every year an average 58 people are killed by lightning strikes which is more than those killed by tornadoes. Unfortunately this number is likely lower than the actual numbers of lightning deaths per year. The Carolinas face dangers from lightning throughout spring and summer. To avoid becoming a lightning statistic just remember - **when thunder roars, go indoors.**

What causes lightning and thunder?

Lightning results from the buildup and discharge of electrical energy between positively and negatively charged ice particles within the storm cloud. A thunderstorm generates a huge static electrical charge as ice particles inside the storm collide and through friction generate a static charge. These particles of suspended ice in the thunderstorm collide as they are carried around by the storm's updraft and downdraft. Once the static electrical charge is strong enough to travel from the cloud to the ground, a lightning bolt is created.

It should be noted that the National Weather Service does not issue warnings for lightning and given the deadly nature of lightning, you should always be aware of the lightning danger anytime a thunderstorm is nearby. A good rule of thumb to live by is:

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.



A lightning bolt contains as much current as three hundred thousand amperes and around three hundred million volts. The intense electrical current heats the air around the lightning strike instantly to 50,000 degrees. This is five times hotter than the surface of the sun. The instantaneous heating of air around the lightning strike causes the air molecules to explosively expand. This expansion occurs so rapidly it compresses the air forming a shock wave similar to a sonic boom. The shock wave travels through the atmosphere, resulting in thunder. The acoustic shockwave near the lightning strike is strong enough to rupture the eardrums of those standing nearby.

Since light travels faster than sound, you can use thunder to gauge the distance of a lightning strike. You merely count the number of seconds between the moment you see the flash of lightning and hear the clap of thunder. Once you see lightning...start counting seconds. For every 5 seconds that go by before you hear the clap of thunder...that's one mile. Keep in mind this technique only tells you how far away that one lightning strike was from your location. The next one could be a lot closer. Lightning can travel 10 to 12 miles from a thunderstorm. This is often farther than the sound of thunder travels. That means that if you can hear thunder you are close enough to a storm to be in danger of being struck by lightning. When thunder roars go indoors.

Lightning



NWS Wilmington, NC

Safety Tips

Know your sources for up-to-date weather information.

NOAA Weather Radio

National Weather Service website (www.weather.gov)

Local TV broadcast



If caught outdoors:

Seek shelter immediately in the closest building or vehicle when you first hear thunder, or see lightning.

Stay inside for at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder.

Do NOT take shelter under trees.

Avoid contact with golf clubs, bicycles, farm equipment, etc.

If you are at the beach or lake:

If there are no shelters nearby, seek shelter immediately in your car.

Stay away from the water.

If you are in a building:

Avoid contact with any electrical equipment.

Unplug appliances, including computers.

Stay away from windows.



For more safety and preparedness information, as well as what you should do after the storm, follow the following links from Ready.gov - <http://www.ready.gov/>

Thunderstorms and Lightning: <http://www.ready.gov/thunderstorms-lightning>



Severe Thunderstorms

Are you ready for severe weather? The best way to be prepared is to stay weather aware, especially when severe weather is expected. Make sure you know the terminology, have a plan and know your surroundings. Do you know the difference between a Watch and a Warning? What are the best sources for important weather information? Where should you take shelter if you're at home, school, or work?

What is a Severe Thunderstorm?

The National Weather Service defines a thunderstorm as severe when it produces a tornado, wind gust of 58 mph or greater, and/or hail that is one inch in diameter (quarter sized) or larger. Prior to 2010, the definition of severe hail was three quarters of an inch in diameter. The decision to raise this value to one inch was made in order to greatly decrease the number of warnings issued. Recent studies have also shown that hail smaller than quarter size does generally not pose a threat to life and property.

It should be noted that the National Weather Service does not issue warnings for lightning and given the deadly nature of lightning, you should always be aware of the lightning danger anytime a thunderstorm is nearby. A good rule of thumb to live by is:

When Thunder Roars, Go Indoors.



What is the Difference between a 'Watch' and a 'Warning'?

"A Severe Thunderstorm Watch has been issued for your area...". The words WATCH and WARNING have significant meanings when it comes to severe weather, but which is which? It is vital that you know the difference between the two.

WATCH: Conditions are favorable for severe weather development in or near the watch box over the next several hours. Stay weather aware!

WARNING: Severe weather is imminent or occurring!
Take action immediately!

Severe Thunderstorms



Safety Tips

Before the Storm

Know your sources for up-to-date weather information.

- NOAA Weather Radio
- National Weather Service website (www.weather.gov)
- Local TV broadcast



Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio.

- If you already have one, refresh the batteries every time you replace the batteries in your smoke detector and CO detector. Always make sure your radio is correctly programmed.
- For any questions or assistance for programming your weather radio, contact your local National Weather Service office.
- Have an emergency/communication plan & emergency kit prepared for you & your family.
- Flashlight and batteries, bicycle helmet(s), out of town contact(s), and much more!

http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/checklist_1.pdf

During the Storm

- Stay Weather Aware!
 - Whether it's a NOAA Weather Radio or local media, always pay attention to new information as weather conditions are quickly changing.
- Do not rely on outdoor sirens!
 - Many locations do not have outdoor sirens, or have sirens that are not operational. Sirens were initially intended to sound for those caught outside in severe weather. If you are in a building or your home, you will likely not hear them. Do not wait to hear a siren to take shelter!
- Pay attention to Severe Thunderstorm Warnings
 - Damaging winds and large hail can be extremely dangerous.
 - They are capable of quickly evolving into a Tornado Warning.
- Always wear closed-toed shoes, and have your emergency plan and kit with you at all times.

For more safety and preparedness information, as well as what you should do after the storm, follow the following links from Ready.gov - <http://www.ready.gov/>

Thunderstorms and Lightning: <http://www.ready.gov/thunderstorms-lightning>



Tornadoes

Tornadoes are one of nature's most violent phenomena. The peak tornado season in the Carolinas occurs in the months of March, April and May, with a secondary peak in September associated with tropical-influenced tornadoes. However, tornadoes have touched down across the region in all 12 months.

The greatest danger faced by residents of the Carolinas is nocturnal, or nighttime, tornadoes. A recent survey found that most people acquire weather information by watching local or national television stations or via the internet. These sources generally do not provide a mechanism or assistance to alert users of approaching tornadoes during the overnight period. Conversely, most NOAA Weather radios are programmable and will turn on in the event of a tornado warning any time day or night. This distinguishes NOAA weather radio as one of the few ways to alert people who are sleeping of

What is the Difference between a 'Watch' and a 'Warning'?

"A Tornado Warning has been issued for your area...". The words WATCH and WARNING have significant meanings when it comes to severe weather, but which is which? It is vital that you know the difference between the two.

WATCH: Conditions are favorable for severe weather development within the watch box over the next several hours.
Stay weather aware!

WARNING: Severe weather is imminent or occurring!
Take action immediately!

What is the Difference between a funnel cloud and a tornado?

A **funnel cloud** is a rotating column of air that extends from the base of a storm cloud that does not make contact with the ground.



A **tornado** is a violently rotating column of air that extends from the base of a storm cloud and makes contact with the ground.

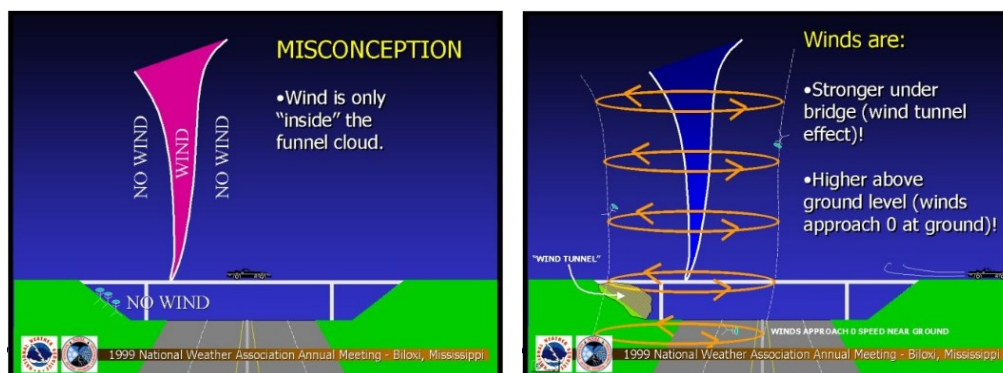


Safety Tips

- Know your sources for up-to-date weather information.
 - NOAA Weather Radio
 - National Weather Service website (www.weather.gov)
 - Local TV broadcast

When a tornado warning is issued for your area or if you spot a tornado, seek shelter immediately!

- If you are caught outdoors:
 - Seek shelter in a low spot like a ditch or culvert. You want to get as low as possible to protect yourself from the flying debris in a tornado. The debris within the tornado is what causes nearly all of the injuries and deaths.
 - Do not get under an overpass or bridge - wind speeds can increase up to 25%.



- If you are in a car:
 - Abandon your vehicle and seek shelter in a substantial structure or in a ditch. Never try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle. Tornadoes do not travel in straight lines and it can be very difficult to determine what direction the tornado is moving.
- If you are in a building (home, school, hospital, nursing home, etc):
 - Go to a safe room, basement, lowest level in the building.
 - If there is not a basement, the safest place is in an interior bathroom or closet. Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Stay away from windows as debris picked up by a tornado can easily shatter a window and enter your home.
 - Do not open windows.
- If you are in a mobile home:
 - Mobile homes and trailers are not safe. Evacuate immediately and seek shelter in a sturdy building.

For more safety and preparedness information, as well as what you should do after the storm, follow the following links from Ready.gov - <http://www.ready.gov/>

Tornadoes: <http://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>



Flooding

...what you should know and best practices to stay safe!

Nationwide, flooding causes more fatalities than any other type of severe weather. Several factors contribute to flooding. The two main factors are the intensity of rainfall and how long rain occurs over any given location. Urbanization, topography, soil type, and soil moisture also play roles in the severity of flood conditions.

Flooding in the Carolinas can result from several different weather situations. Slow moving thunderstorms can dump heavy rain over the same location resulting in rapid flash flooding, or days of steady rain can cause creeks and rivers to flood over large areas. Lastly, any thunderstorm moving across metropolitan or urbanized areas can cause flash flooding due to the amount of runoff generated by highly developed areas. Tropical storms and hurricanes can also be prolific flood producers.

Rushing water in the form of a flash flood can quickly become deadly. Running water that is deep enough to cover just half of an automobile's tires is usually enough to make the vehicle begin to float or pushed off the road, and be carried by the current. Most flood deaths occur in automobiles.

Flooding is dangerous any time of day, but most dangerous at night when it is difficult to observe. Limited visibility at night makes it not only more difficult to see flood waters, but also nearly impossible to gage water depth and whether is standing or flowing. In many cases drivers who enter the water severely misjudge the depth and strength of the flood waters.

When flooding is possible, the National Weather Service will issue a Flood Watch. This tells you to remain alert to the possibility of heavy rain and flooding within the next six to twelve hours. Once a flood warning is issued, then it is time to take action. When a warning is issued for your area, it means that flooding has been reported or is imminent. This is the time to closely monitor the situation and move quickly if flood waters threaten. One of the best practices to observe during flooding is avoiding unnecessary travel.



Photo Source: WBTW-TV



When approaching water flowing over the road, turn around and go the other way – it's dangerous.

Turn Around, Don't Drown!

National Weather Service
Weather Forecast Office
Wilmington, North Carolina

2015 Gardner Drive
Wilmington, NC 28405
Phone: (910) 762-4289
www.weather.gov/ilm

Webmaster's Email: ILM.webmaster@noaa.gov



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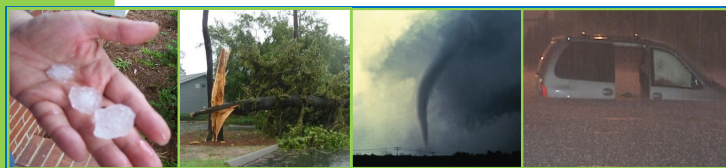
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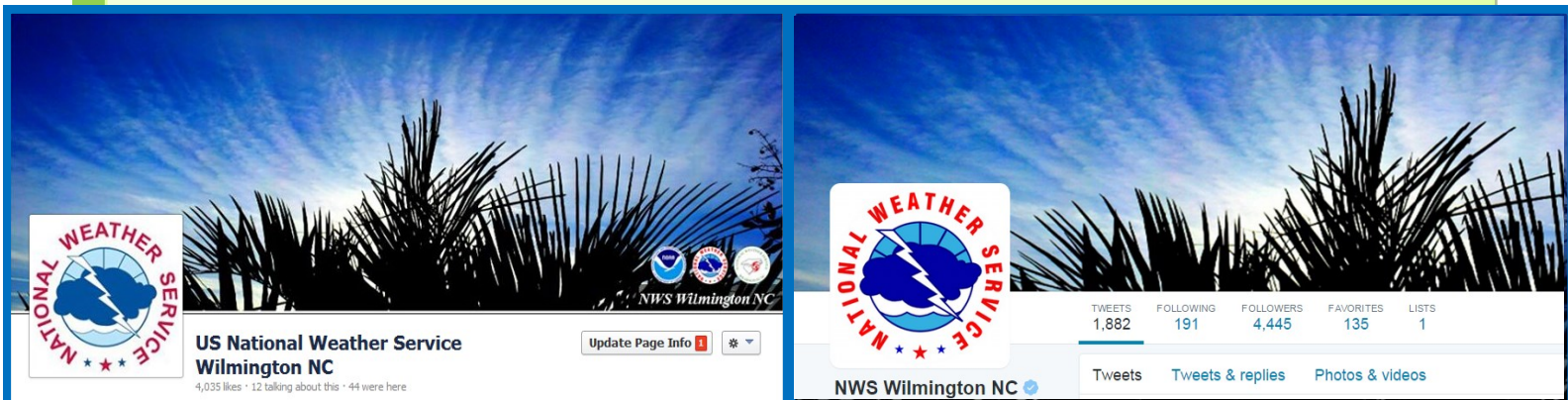
We need your Storm Reports!!

Events of tornadoes, hail, damaging winds,
and flooding are very important to us.

Please call: 1-800-697-3901

Storm reports **ONLY**

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US National Weather Service
Wilmington, NC



@NWSWilmingtonNC

*Where we share adverse weather information and historical weather events,
and you share storm reports and any weather questions you might have!*