



Warning Coordination Meteorologist **Barry Goldsmith** shows a winning hand at the McAllen Convention Center.

Wheelin' and Dealin' Weather Information

NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley Greets Thousands at Winter Texan Expo

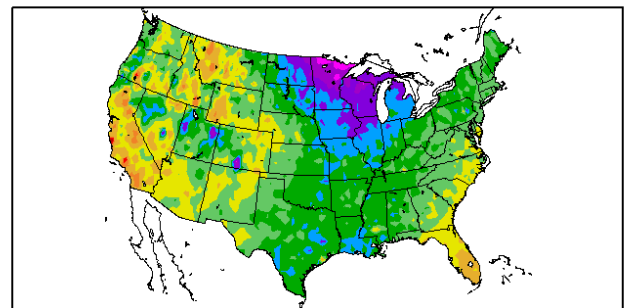
Warning Coordination Meteorologist Barry Goldsmith and Electronics Technician Cesar Ochoa were the “hot hands” at the 21st [Annual Winter Texan Expo and Health Fair](#) in McAllen on January 21 and 22, 2014. Winter Texans, which add more than 150 thousand temporary residents to the Rio Grande Valley each January and February, flocked to the event to check out the latest in health services and other activities geared toward retired folks seeking fun in the South Texas sun and (mostly) warm weather. This year’s theme was “casino”, and we assured everyone that we’ll never gamble with their lives or livelihood when it comes to dangerous conditions.

Weather was certainly a “hot” – or maybe “cool” – topic for the visitors in 2014. Of the thousands who passed by our booth, several hundred stopped by for a conversation about the weather and weather information during the two days. The most popular discussion was the notably chilly weather in the Valley during December and January, including disappointment in the unseasonably cold, and damp, forecast for [Friday, January 24th](#), when many planned to hit the golf course or other outdoor activities.

Cold is a relative term. Winter Texans, who hail primarily from the Great Plains and Upper Midwest

states, were quite happy to deal with a few chilly days interspersed with the many “Chamber of Commerce” days (sunny and 70s) in January 2014. Visitors to our booth came from as far as Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Philadelphia, PA, and central Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Canada; the vast majority were clustered in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin – states that were experiencing one of the coldest winters in decades (below).

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
11/25/2013 – 1/23/2014



Generated 1/24/2014 at HPRCC using provisional data. Regional Climate Centers
Above: Temperature Departure from Normal, late autumn through mid winter 2013/2014. Temperatures in the “Winter Texan Zone” (Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa) were some 6 to 10+ degrees below normal.

Many of the visitors picked up Skywatcher cloud charts, thunderstorm/tornado/lightning brochures, and hurricane information. Most popular were refrigerator magnets, which advertise the office's website and main phone number. Dozens of visitors commented favorably on the government weather websites, with several mentioning "how you guys are the best!". Goldsmith and Ochoa took the opportunity to promote weather.gov/rgv as the primary source for all things weather related in the Rio Grande Valley – beyond the routine forecast. The site was shown and demonstrated on the 42" monitor.

The number of Winter Texans using smart phones to retrieve weather information continues to grow, and there were dozens of questions about an NWS "App". NOAA Weather Radio was also mentioned by more than a dozen visitors as an important tool for their decision making during the spring and summer tornado season.

"This was my first experience with the Winter Texan Expo," said Goldsmith. "Winter Texans have a keen knowledge of hazardous weather; I was impressed by their knowledge of the National Weather Service and the trust they place in us to protect them from hazards in their temporary and permanent homes."



Electronics Technician **Cesar Ochoa** explains how data are processed by office computing systems which allow forecasters more time to focus on observed and future weather conditions.