

**April 16th 1998 Tornadoes**  
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The day before the Nashville tornado (April 15th) there was severe weather across the Mid-Mississippi Valley and the southern Ohio Valley where several tornadoes touched down in Illinois starting in the late afternoon. The outbreak that was to come to Middle Tennessee on April 16th was well advertised to the media and other outlets.

The high in Nashville on April 15th was a very warm 79 degrees but nowhere near the record for the date of 87 degrees back in 1936. The temperature during the night of April 15th into the 16th actually rose. As temperatures warmed overnight in Middle Tennessee, tornadoes were occurring in Arkansas with fatalities being reported.

Being scheduled for the dayshift on April 16th I was called in early, around 4 am as storms were moving into western Middle Tennessee at that time. As I stepped outside at 4 am it was warm and muggy with temperatures in the middle 60's and dewpoints very close to the temperature. As I left the house I glanced at my 1958 Taylor Aneroid barometer and noted it was reading 29.00 inches of mercury, station pressure which is a low barometer reading. As I drove to work which is a short distance I noticed lightning flashing to the west.

Upon my arrival tornado warnings had just been issued for counties to the west of Nashville. At the time we were in the AFOS era. AWIPS didn't arrive until much later. The pup workstation sit in the northwest corner of the office. It had a graphics tablet with two 19 inch displays. We had pc's flanking each side of the pup work station that had our warning programs on them. We used the PCs to issue warnings and follow up statements. Although there were templates for the warning programs (SRwarn and WISE) we still had to do a lot of hand editing. Not as easy to issue warnings back then as it is today with AWIPS and WarnGen. Storms continued in Middle Tennessee throughout the morning hours on April 16th with several warnings being issued.

By 8 am, several day workers had arrived and by noon we had a lot of staffing as several off duty forecasters had been called in to help. I recall at one point turning around from the pup workstation and thinking to myself we sure have a lot of people in here. Hope there's enough chairs to go around. Someone during the morning had placed a microphone at the pup work station where I was sitting and it was recording what was being said by the forecasters working the radar. I was so busy with the storms that I did not notice the microphone until some pointed it out to me. They said it had probably been there a couple of hours.

The cell that produced the Nashville tornado first developed well to our west in Humphreys County at mid-afternoon. It moved due east toward Nashville. I issued the warning that included Davidson County and the city of Nashville around 3 pm when it was in eastern Dickson County. By 330 pm it was moving through downtown Nashville from west to east across the city. I think

there were 3 and possibly 4 tornadoes in Davidson County that afternoon. Needless to say the phones were ringing off the hook from 3 pm on as reports kept coming in at a record pace. As the tornado was now moving toward the office I remember asking Shannon White (Intern at the time) to call WFO Memphis and let them know that we might take a direct hit and if we did they would have to take over the warnings for Nashville.

With warnings having been issued well in advance and the tornado now nearing the office to our south-southwest everyone including myself had stepped outside to have a look. I remember how calm it was. No wind at all. There was steam fog rising off the pavement. It was very dark to south-southwest. My first thought was the calm before the storm that we've all read and heard about and now I am actually experiencing it for the first time.

It appeared to most of us that the tornado was probably going to miss the office and go off to our southeast. Sure enough that is what happened. What a relief. The tornado probably came within about a mile of the office at its closest point. It tracked along the north side of Lebanon road and through north Wilson County into Trousdale County. Another tornado about an hour later would take a similar track toward the office. Fortunately that tornado would also go off to our southeast and move east into the Lebanon area.

I don't recall the office being in chaos but there was a lot of folks in here and we were all very busy. I think there were 119 tornado warnings issued during the April 16th 1998 outbreak and at least that many statements and follow ups. There were still a few people in the office when I left at 9 pm that evening.