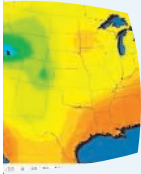




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Tallahassee topics

NEWS AND NOTES FROM YOUR LOCAL NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE.

The National Weather Service (NWS) office in Tallahassee, FL provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for Southeast Alabama, Southwest & South Central Georgia, the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend, and the adjacent Gulf of Mexico coastal waters. Our primary mission is the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

National Weather Service Tallahassee & Social Media

By Alex Lamers

There has been a tremendous amount of change in the way people use computers, mobile devices, and the internet just in the past decade. Consider that as recently as July 2006, we were still about a year away from the first generation iPhone and less than 10% of Americans aged 30 or older were using social networking sites (Pew Survey). Fast forward to almost 8 years later and there are now numerous varieties of smartphones available and 72% of online American adults use social networking sites.

Because we have evolved to become a more mobile society, taking advantage of the internet and social networks while roaming or at home, the National Weather Service has sought to be involved in new information delivery platforms. One of the ways we are doing this is through accounts for offices like ours (NWS Tallahassee) on websites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The National Weather Service began using Facebook experimentally in 2011, and Twitter and YouTube have followed in recent years. Regardless of where you live in the United States, you should now be able to find your local NWS forecast office's accounts on any of those three social networks. You should also be able to find some national level accounts such as National Weather Service Headquarters, the Storm Prediction Center, or the National Hurri-

cane Center, among others.

One of the major benefits that we have noticed is the ability to find out what's going on across our forecast area – getting “ground truth”. Storm spotters, amateur radio operators, law enforcement, and emergency management officials have provided this information for a long time, and will continue to do so. However, social networking sites allow us to retrieve more information in real time, which can be very beneficial to forecasters as they go about their duties.

On Twitter, we have been promoting a hashtag – #TLHspotter – that people can use in their tweets to send us reports. For those that are unfamiliar with the term “hashtag”, it is simply a phrase or word that you put the pound symbol (#) in front of on Twitter. The site then allows you to easily find any tweet that used that hashtag, from any person. Think of it like a folder on the desktop of your computer, except anyone can add their information using the hashtag.

Consider the winter storm of January 28-29, 2014, about one month ago. The #TLHspotter hashtag was used a total of 496 times in two days, which allowed us to receive hundreds of



reports and photos of ice, sleet, and snow across our forecast area. We also received 121 reports on Twitter by people tweeting directly at us, and another 74 reports on our Facebook page. In other words, we were able to quickly gather a vast amount of information that would have otherwise been difficult to accumulate.

If you haven't already, consider joining in the efforts to report weather to us on our Facebook and Twitter profiles. You also don't need to see a tornado to send us a tweet or comment on our Facebook page. What may seem like mundane weather to you could actually be useful information to us!

(Cont. p. 3)



Employee Spotlight: Tim Barry

Journeyman Forecaster since Summer 1999

By Katie Moore & Tim Barry

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Q: How did you become interested in weather?

A: It had a lot to do with the diverse weather experiences that I had at an early age. Although I was very young, I remember a few times when my family and I were huddled in our hallway when we lived in Waukegan, IL due to tornado threats. One such tornado caused damage to apartment complexes close to where we lived and much later in life I came to realize that the tornado was one of many associated with the Palm Sunday Tornado Outbreak of 1965. When I lived in New England, I saw plenty of snow storms and experienced Nor'easters. Shortly after I moved to Jacksonville, Florida in 1974, I saw my first tornado along with several water-spouts. I also remember Florida thunderstorms as being the most intense that I'd ever experienced. When I was in the 8th grade at the age of 13, I made the decision that I wanted to be a meteorologist.

Q: How did you get your start in the National Weather Service?

A: When I graduated from FSU, the NWS had a hiring freeze and I tried unsuccessfully to get a meteorologist position in the private sector. With no income to support myself, I moved back home with my parents who had moved to Augusta, GA during my senior year. I eventually accepted a full time job as a shoe department manager at K-Mart and was beginning to see my dream of becoming a meteorologist slip away. In 1988, the Weather Service Office (WSO) in Augusta cut back its hours of operations instead of backfilling positions after three employees retired. As a result, there was a need for weather observers during the hours of WFO closure from 10 PM until 6 AM. I quit my job at K-Mart to be a full time contract weather observer and was eventually hired as a meteorologist intern at WFO Augusta when the office resumed 24 hour operations a year later.

Q: What is your favorite part of your job?

A: Although I still enjoy weather forecasting, I feel the most rewarding part of my job as radar operator during severe weather events. The National Weather Service's number one mission is the protection of life and property. It is the radar operator's responsibility to disseminate accurate and timely warnings to alert the public of impending danger and sometimes life threatening weather.

Q: What's the most challenging part of your job?

A: In recent years, the National Weather Service has placed a greater emphasis on relaying weather information through social media such as Facebook, tweets, texting and hoots. Maybe I'm just old fashioned, stubborn, or both, but outside of the office I am not involved in any of these medias. I no longer have a personal Facebook account and to the surprise of many of my friends and acquaintances, I don't text. As a result, it is a challenge at times for me to keep up with all the latest trends to disseminate weather data to the public.

Q: You've been with the NWS for 25 years, what are some of the biggest changes you've seen?

A: The biggest change that I've seen is the technological advancements of our equipment. I remember shortly after I began my career, our staff was excited about replacing our Intel 386 computer with the Intel 486. Anyone old enough to remember this computing system only needs to visit our office to appreciate just how far we've come since then. Then there's the paradigm shift in the way we prepare and disseminate most of our text products. Instead of hand typing lengthy products such as public zones and coastal waters forecasts, we now populate and edit grids and create these products with text formatters. Twenty five years ago these products would mostly be disseminated to the public by a human voice over the NOAA Weather Radio. Today, aside from the social media methods mentioned earlier, we have our own website and a fully automated NOAA Weather Radio.

Q: When you are not working here, what do you like to do?

A: I like playing chess and watching sports; especially college football. The only sport that I actively participate in is bowling. I also play a lot of fantasy sports. A few years ago I finished number 11 in the world in ESPN's fantasy baseball contest. I have a membership at Gold's Gym but because of my rotating shift schedule, I don't work out as often as I'd like. I tell people that my favorite lift is the fork lift. That's when I lift the fork from the plate to my mouth. I'm also very active in my church.



Ice Storm of 2014

By Mark Wool

The third winter storm to impact the NWS Tallahassee County warning area in five years brought a wintry mix of precipitation to virtually the entire forecast area on January 28th and 29th. The predominant precipitation types were sleet and freezing rain, although snow did fall across our northwestern zones. Ice was observed all the way to the coast, a very rare occurrence indeed! The event resulted in the closing of area schools as well as many bridges and overpasses and even a large stretch of Interstate 10. A detailed summary of this storm, including a photo gallery, is available on the following web page.

http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tae/?n=event-20140128_winterstorm

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This Quarter's Focus:

NWS Tallahassee & the State of Florida Meteorologists

By Ron Block & Kelly Godsey

The NWS Tallahassee (TAE) is entrusted with the primary mission of protecting life and property across portions of North Florida, Southeast Alabama and Southern Georgia as well as the Gulf of Mexico. To fulfill our mission we engage with a myriad of state, county, and local agencies both on a routine and non-routine basis. This mutually beneficial relationship is critical in ensuring that the primary mission is realized.

One of the strongest interactions occurs between NWS TAE and the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM). Within FDEM, the Florida State Watch Office, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, actively monitors weather and non-weather related incidents across the state of Florida. At FDEM, State Meteorologist, Amy Godsey (pictured) and her meteorological support unit work within the State Watch Office. They coordinate with NWS offices around the state to provide routine and event-driven products to brief the Governor and other state officials, agency officials, and others. During adverse weather situations, this unit supports the operation of FDEM and helps the agency prepare, respond, and recover from any natural disaster that affects the state. Godsey adds, "The National Weather Service in Tallahassee partners with our agency frequently during public outreach events and are crucial in helping us prepare the citizens of Florida to any disasters that should impact our area."

Although TAE and FDEM interact on a routine basis, its during rapidly developing weather scenarios where the critical interaction is best exemplified. TAE assists FDEM by providing weather briefings and detailed briefing packets and webinars while participating in FDEM conference calls during event-driven scenarios. Outlooks and briefings provided by the NWS for hazardous weather, like hurricanes, help FDEM meteorologists provide guidance before a storm strikes, to ensure the state and citizens are as prepared as possible. During and after the time a storm has passed, FDEM meteorologists provide specific forecasts to support response and recovery operations. The NWS office in Tallahassee also serves as one of the backup facilities for the

FDEM State Watch Office, should the facility become disabled. During times when official time-critical life or property messages must be disseminated to the public, for example an earthquake or nuclear power plant warning, FDEM may request that



TAE disseminate Civil Emergency Messages to the public via our NOAA Weather Radio. They may also be requested to provide disaster response support, generally in the form of weather observations and public, aviation, marine and hydrologic forecasts.

Several communications systems exist at TAE to support the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), including EM-Net, a satellite system installed by FDEM. TAE can contact EOC and individual counties this way but the EOC uses EM-Net to disseminate TAE generated short-fused warnings to the impacted counties. TAE and FDEM collaborate on a variety of outreach activities like the North Florida Fair to educate residents on severe weather and weather safety.

TAE also prepares daily fire weather forecasts and issues red flag watches and warnings when conditions are favorable for the spread of wildfires. Florida Forest Service State Fire Meteorologist Sean Luchs is tasked with monitoring and forecasting fire weather for the entire state. He notes that "in this capacity I always look forward to interacting with TAE, and especially fire weather focal point, Tim Barry, and Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Jeff Evans, to create the best fire weather warning criteria possible for Florida. Inter-office cooperation has worked to improve information available to response agencies, prescribed burners and the general public."

In summary, the strong relationship between TAE and the various state of Florida meteorologists ensures that area residents are well informed and protected from the vagaries of weather.

NWS Tallahassee & Social Media

(Cont. from p. 1)



And it's important to note that we are not just using social networking sites to receive information, we are also using them to disseminate forecast information in a format that is useful to you. It is a way you can receive our take on the upcoming weather, some weather facts and history, weather records, safety information, and more. Our goal is to use Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to provide you an easy way to obtain information. If you find our posts informative or useful, please share them with your family and friends with a share or retweet! That is one of the major benefits of social networking – the ability to rapidly spread information. If there is a type of post you would like to see more of on our Facebook or Twitter accounts, let us know; we appreciate your feedback.

Thank you to all of you who have interacted with us on a social networking site in one way or another. If you enjoy our presence on these platforms, be sure to recommend us. We hope to see you there, whether it's giving us a report, asking a question, sharing our forecasts, or learning something new.

Find Us On:

Facebook – <http://www.facebook.com/US.NationalWeatherService.Tallahassee.gov>

Twitter – <http://twitter.com/NWSTallahassee>

YouTube – <http://www.youtube.com/user/NWSTallahassee>



Outreach & Diversity Efforts

By Ron Block

The office remains active in both Diversity/EEO and outreach activities. This issue marks the 6th publication of the Tallahassee Topics. We celebrated African American History Month in February with a very successful roundtable discussion involving six panelists, three raised in Florida and three in Africa. Each represented major FSU African and African-American organizations. The group participated in a very spirited debate on the unique challenges, opportunities and limitations these groups face in life and in academia. The event was preceded by a tasty Creole lunch. The next event, tentatively scheduled for May, will celebrate Asian-American History Month.

Management-Admin Team

Jane Hollingsworth, MIC
Jeffrey Evans, WCM
SOO (Vacant)
Doug Sherrick, ESA
Chris Duggan, ASA
Toan Tran, ITO
Hydrologist (Vacant)

Lead Forecasters

Ron Block
Mark Wool
Ken Gould
Jeff Fournier
Parks Camp

Journeyman Forecasters

Tim Barry
Kelly Godsey
Don Van Dyke
Alex Lamers
Donal Harrigan

HMTs

Jim Bolden, OPL

Interns

Katie Moore
Claudia (Jeanie) McDermott
Emma Weston

Electronic Technicians

Ron Eimiller
Clifton Bennett

During December, the office hosted a number of FSU meteorology students who observed upper air balloon launches. In January, the office hosted students from Hawks Rise Elementary School. Several staffers served as science fair judges for a Tallahassee area home school group. Other employees participated in an activity at Panama City Beach focused on Rip Current Awareness. Tim Barry taught a fire weather course at the Bear Creek Educational Facility near Lake Talquin. Ron Block interacted with the FAMU Consortium of Outreach Programs (CORP) which develops academic and training programs in the STEM fields for area high school students in underserved communities. During February, the office provided a tour for Tallavana Christian School from Havana Florida and to a home school group from Valdosta, Georgia. Mark Wool lectured on marine forecasting challenges and service improvements at an annual seminar held at the MarineMax marina in Panama City Beach. Ron served as an evaluator in the awarding of Hollings Scholarships.



The TAE staff continue teaching the NWS Operational Meteorology course for FSU students. Currently, we host four graduate FSU students who continue to assume increasing responsibilities in assisting the forecasters in their duties. Looking ahead, the office will be participating in Springtime Tallahassee in late March and the NOAA Hurricane Hunters will visit in late May at the Tallahassee Regional Airport. In addition to aircraft tours, highlights include meeting Hurricane Center staff, exhibits on meteorology, weather balloon launches and tours of emergency management support vehicles.

Climate Recap for Winter

By Tim Barry

The climate for Tallahassee during the 3 month period of December 2013 through February 2014 saw temperatures that were warmer than normal. The average temperature for winter was 54.7°F, 1.7°F above normal. December and February were warmer than normal and January was colder. December was the 6th warmest on record for Tallahassee with an average temperature of 59.0°F, 5.8°F above normal. The highest temperature recorded at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 84°F on December 7th which established a new record for the day and tied the all-time high temperature for the month of December. The lowest temperature was 22°F on January 7th which was our only hard freeze of the winter. The high temperature on Jan 7th only reached 35°F which was the coldest daytime high since February 4th 1996. There were 22 days with minimum temperatures at or below freezing this past winter, 4 below normal. During winter we normally see 13.09" of rain and this year we received 12.94", only 0.15" below normal. The greatest amount in a 24-hr period was 1.87" on the 14th-15th of December. A rare winter event brought a mixture of ice pellets and freezing rain to the Tallahassee area on Jan 28th-29th. Officially, there was a trace of ice pellets recorded at the Tallahassee Regional Airport on the 29th.

Outlook for Spring

By Tim Barry

The latest outlook for spring (March through May) from the Climate Prediction Center calls for an enhanced chance for experiencing above normal temperatures (right) and equal chances of experiencing above, below or near normal rainfall. The average temperature for Tallahassee during spring is 66.9 degrees and the average rainfall is 12.47 inches. The current El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle across the eastern Pacific is neutral and is forecast to remain in the neutral phase at least through May. The ENSO cycle has little impact on our local weather during the spring. March is typically the peak of our primary severe weather season. April on the other hand is our driest month of the year, averaging only 3.06" of rain.

