



# CAROLINA SKY WATCHER

APRIL-JUNE 2005

## TORNADO SEASON IS HERE! BY HAL AUSTIN

Last year was a record setting year for tornadoes in North Carolina. Seventy tornado touchdowns were reported from the mountains to the coast. Over the past 10 years, nearly 400 tornadoes have struck North Carolina resulting in 6 deaths, 291 reported injuries and about \$231 million in damage. Fortunately, most tornadoes that strike the state are relatively weak and short-lived. However, even weak tornadoes pack winds of 60-110 mph. April is the peak month for tornadoes in eastern North Carolina.



*Carteret County tornado 2004*

Most tornado deaths & injuries across the state have occurred outdoors, in automobiles and mobile homes. When a tornado warning is issued for your area, seek shelter in a substantial building. The safest place is in an interior room on the lowest floor. If you are caught outdoors, seek shelter in a low spot like a ditch or culvert. If you are in your car, abandon it and seek shelter.

Remember, a tornado watch means conditions in the atmosphere are good for tornadoes to form. A watch covers a large area is in effect for several hours. It is issued by the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

A tornado warning means a tornado has been detected on radar or reported

*(Continued on page 2)*

## SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS BY HAL AUSTIN



The National Weather Service considers a thunderstorm severe if it produces penny-sized or larger hail and/or winds of 58 mph or higher. Lightning occurs with all thunderstorms and is one of the greatest dangers we face in North Carolina through the spring and summer. Nationwide, lightning is responsible for at least 80 deaths and 300 injuries every year.

Because of the abundance of outdoor activities in North Carolina, we are

*(Continued on page 2)*

### **SPOTTER TRAINING CLASSES**

- Are posted at the top of our webpage at [www.erh.noaa.gov/mhx](http://www.erh.noaa.gov/mhx)
- Can be scheduled by calling 252-223-5122

#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| NEW SKYWARN FOCAL POINT | 2 |
| WEATHER SCHOOL          | 3 |
| WIRELESS WEATHER        | 3 |
| SAFE BOATING IN STORMS  | 3 |
| SPRING OUT-LOOK         | 4 |



## TORNADOES

(Continued from page 1)

by the public. Warnings come directly from your local National Weather Service office. They are in effect for an hour or less and cover an individual county (sometimes two). Don't be caught unaware! Listen to All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio for the latest watches, warnings and forecasts.

## SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

(Continued from page 1)

especially vulnerable to lightning. If outdoors, move indoors if possible. Stay off the phone and away from windows. If caught outdoors, stay away from tall objects which can attract lightning. If on a boat, seek shelter below deck.

Remember, a severe thunderstorm *watch* means conditions are favorable for severe thunderstorms to form. A watch is issued by the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma. It covers a large area and is in effect for several hours. A severe thunderstorm *warning* means a severe thunderstorm has been detected on radar or reported by the public. Listen to All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio for the latest watches and warnings.

### Did You Know?

Over 40 NWS booklets & brochures are available online for a *FREE* download. Most are in color! Subjects include basic & advanced spotter guides, lightning, thunderstorms, tornadoes, flash floods and more! Go to:

[www.nws.noaa.gov/om/brochures.shtml](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/brochures.shtml)

## NEW SKYWARN FOCAL POINT BY HAL AUSTIN



Hello! My name is Hal Austin NC4HA. I'm the new Skywarn Focal Point here at NWS Newport. My predecessor, Nick Petro N3OET, took a job promotion to the NWS office in Tampa. I moved here in early January from Charleston SC. I was the Skywarn Focal Point at the NWS office there. I was involved in the local ham club and have net control experience with a Skywarn Net we had on Tuesday nights. I hope to get involved in the Skywarn Net at 9 pm every Tuesday. I look forward to having a QSO with you, either face-to-face or on the air. 73!

If you observe severe weather, we want to hear from you! Please call us at:

**1-800-889-6889**

WEATHER SCHOOL— ALWAYS IN SESSION! *BY HAL AUSTIN*



If you'd like to educate yourself about the "how's and why's" of meteorology, here's the perfect

website for you! Online since February of 2003, *Jetstream* is the National Weather Service's online weather school. It's the perfect resource for educators, emergency managers, spotters or anyone interested in learning about weather. Arranged by topic, you can learn about any aspect of weather you're interested in. There's a set of review questions at the end of each section too, so you can check what you've learned. Stop by the classroom today! The address is: [www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jetstream).



**Listen Up!**

Wherever you go, take All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio with you! NWR broadcasts 24/7 on over 900 transmitters in all 50 states. The latest forecasts, hourly observations, watches & warnings are always available. These are the frequencies NWS Newport uses:

|          |             |
|----------|-------------|
| New Bern | 162.400 MHz |
| Hatteras | 162.475 MHz |
| Mamie    | 162.425 MHz |
| Warsaw   | 162.425 MHz |

WEATHER OVER THE WIRELESS *BY HAL AUSTIN*



The National Weather Service is proud to announce the availability of anywhere/anytime forecasts. Just by entering your city/state or zip code, you can receive the latest forecast from your local NWS office using your wireless device. All you need is a wireless device that can surf the Internet along with a wireless Internet service provider. You can choose from a "quick glance"

forecast consisting of a word or two and the forecast temperature for the next 36 hours, the complete text of the 7-day forecast, and the latest Doppler radar imagery. Use either one of these URLs to access the data: [mobile.srh.noaa.gov](http://mobile.srh.noaa.gov) or [mobile.srh.weather.gov](http://mobile.srh.weather.gov).



SAFE BOATING IN THUNDERSTORMS *BY BOB FREDERICK*



Thunderstorms become more frequent over the coastal waters during the spring and summer months. Thunderstorms pose a significant risk to boaters, with strong winds, rapidly building waves, hail, lightning, and even waterspouts possible. Mariners should always get the latest forecast before heading out so they can be prepared to take action if thunderstorms threaten.

The National Weather Service in Newport will issue Special Marine Warnings for the Albemarle and Pamlico sounds, plus the coastal waters from Currituck Beach Light south to Surf City and out 40 nautical miles. Special Marine

*(Continued on page 5)*

**Did You Know?**

You can view live Doppler radar data 24/7 from NWS radars across all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico & Guam! Just go to <http://weather.noaa.gov/radar/national.html>

## SPRING IS FIRE WEATHER SEASON BY JIM MERRELL



Spring is here and that means warmer temperatures and people doing more outside activities. Unfortunately that can also mean an increased threat of wildfires in eastern North Carolina due to the vast forest land. Here are some tips on outdoor fire safety from the N.C. Division of Forest Resources:

### **DEBRIS**

Check local laws on burning. Some communities allow burning only during specified hours while others forbid it entirely.

Obtain a burning permit. Contact your local County Ranger for the names and locations of the nearest burning permit agent, or use NCDFR's Online Burning Permit Application ([www.dfr.state.nc.us/burn\\_permit/burn\\_intro.htm](http://www.dfr.state.nc.us/burn_permit/burn_intro.htm)). Permits are free.

Check the weather; don't burn on dry, windy days.

### **HOUSEHOLD TRASH IS ILLEGAL TO BURN**

Do not burn household trash. It is illegal and dangerous.

### **SMOKING**

When smoking outdoors grind out your cigarette, cigar or pipe tobacco in the dirt. Never grind it on a stump or log.

### **CHARCOAL BRIQUETTES**

After using the burning charcoal briquettes, douse them thoroughly with water. Don't just sprinkle a bit over the coals.

### **BUILDING AND PUTTING OUT A CAMPFIRE**

Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass and leaves. Pull any extra wood away from the fire.

Keep plenty of water handy and have a shovel for throwing dirt on the fire if it gets out of control. \*Start with dry twigs and small sticks. Then add larger sticks as the fire builds up. Put the largest pieces of wood on last, pointing them toward the center of the fire and gradually push them into the flames.

Keep the campfire small. A good bed of coals or a small fire surrounded by rocks gives plenty of heat. Scrape away litter, duff and any burnable material within a 10-foot (3 meter) diameter circle. This will keep a small campfire from spreading.

Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.

Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals and sticks are wet. Move rocks - there may be more burning embers underneath. Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again. Be sure all burned material has been extinguished and cooled. If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix enough soil or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cooled.

Since people cause most wildfires, we all have a part in preventing them. We can be more careful ourselves, and whoever we are and wherever we are, we can influence others to use more care with fires. Remember, a little extra care takes only a few minutes of your time. And it could prevent a wildfire.

Based on *Fire Safety Outdoors* (NASF-FP-5), a pamphlet produced by the National Association of State Foresters.



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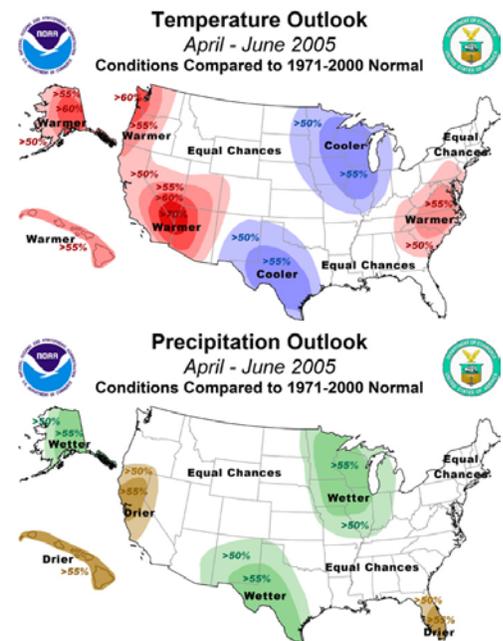
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## SPRING OUTLOOK BY HAL AUSTIN

On March 17th, NOAA released the 2005 spring outlook for April through June. The temperature and precipitation graphics are shown on the right. For eastern North Carolina, warmer than normal temperatures are expected. As for precipitation, there are equal chances of rainfall amounts being below normal, normal and above normal. NOAA's El Nino experts expect the currently weak El Nino conditions to continue to fade with a return to neutral conditions (neither El Nino or La Nina) during the spring. Neither El Nino nor La Nina will be an influencing factor in weather and climate patterns across the U.S. this season. The entire report can be found online at: [www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2005/s2406.htm](http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2005/s2406.htm)



## SAFE BOATING IN STORMS

*(Continued from page 3)*

Warnings are issued for winds 34 knots or higher...hail  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch or larger, and waterspouts. Mariners are urged to seek safe harbor when thunderstorms are approaching or a Special Marine Warning is issued. If it is impossible to make it back to shore before the thunderstorm hits, all passengers should put on life jackets and go below deck if possible. Loose objects should be secured, and if there is lightning unplug all electrical equipment. Heading into the wind is usually the most seaworthy position for small boats. All Hazards NOAA weather radio provides continuous weather programming for most boating areas...and will instantly broadcast a Special Marine Warning if one is issued for that part of the coast.