



SUNCOAST OBSERVER

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by the NWS Tampa Bay Area, FL

Winter 2024

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Skywarn Recognition Day 2024

By: Jennifer Hubbard

This year we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Skywarn Recognition Day on December 7th, 2024. This Recognition Day was developed in 1999 by the National Weather Service and the American Radio Relay League. It celebrates the contributions that Skywarn™ volunteers make to the NWS mission of protecting life and property. Skywarn™ spotters provide critical weather information to the NWS offices across the country, reporting their observations of damage from severe thunderstorms, flooding, tornadoes and waterspouts, and wind observations. Amateur radio operators comprise a large percentage of the Skywarn™ volunteers, organizing groups and activating before, during and after events to help gather information and report directly to our office. They also provide vital communication between the NWS and emergency management if and when normal communications fail, such as after a tropical event.

Here at the NWS Tampa Bay Area office, we had several Skywarn™ Amateur Radio operators come into the office for Recognition Day and make contact with over 60 individuals from across the state, and even as far away as Mobile, AL. We appreciate our Skywarn™ spotters and the Amateur Radio groups in our area that provide us such valuable on the ground reports throughout the year! THANK YOU!! We are entering into training season, so if you are due for renewal or are interested in becoming a Skywarn™ spotter, please check the schedule at <https://www.weather.gov/tbw/skywarn>. We do not currently have any trainings scheduled, but online classes through the Spotter Network and MetEd are always available (included in the above link).

Back to Back - Major Hurricanes Helene & Milton

Call us 24/7!

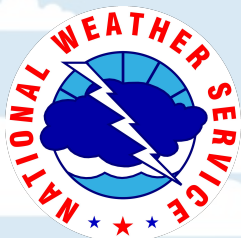


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By: **Austen Flannery**

Hurricanes Helene and Milton were two of the most impactful storms for the West Coast of Florida in the last one hundred years, rivaled only by storms as infamous as Hurricane Charley, Hurricane Irma, and Hurricane Ian. Unlike past storms, however, the scope of impacts was much larger. From historic storm surge that impacted the entire West Coast, to flooding rainfall that caused new record water levels on area rivers, some of the highest wind speeds recorded in the Tampa Bay Area, and a prolific tornado outbreak across Central and South Florida, these two storms touched everyone's lives in some way across the region. For a full review, visit our [Hurricanes Helene & Milton Story Map](#)

Hurricane Helene:

Hurricane Helene made landfall in the Big Bend region of Florida as a Category 4 hurricane late on September 26, 2024. Along the Florida Coast, the highest storm surge since the 1921 Tampa Bay Hurricane affected areas from the Big Bend region of Florida southward to Charlotte County. Record water levels were recorded at numerous tidal gauges along the coast, surpassing many water level records set by Hurricane Ian (2022) and Hurricane Idalia (2023).

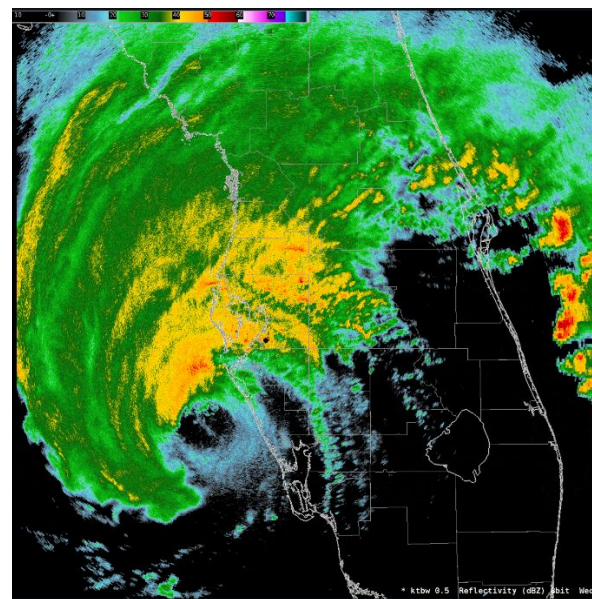
Helene brought widespread tropical storm-force gusts across the region, with a few locations at the immediate coast seeing hurricane-force wind gusts. This caused power outages and downed trees across the region. Due to the fast-moving and distant nature of Helene's core from Florida, most areas only saw 1-3 inches of rainfall.



Hurricane Milton

Just two weeks after Helene, Hurricane Milton made landfall on Siesta Key in Sarasota County, Florida as a Category 3 Hurricane with estimated wind speeds of 120 mph. Hurricane-force winds were felt well away from the center of the storm, with widespread damage to trees and the roofs of homes. The strong winds also caused substantial damage to the power infrastructure, with some locations without power for a week or more.

Prior to landfall, a historic tornado outbreak occurred with Milton's outer bands. This outbreak consisted of more than 40 tornadoes, with a dozen tornadoes impacting Central and Southwest Florida. To the north of the landfall point, Milton brought historic rainfall to Central Florida, with catastrophic flash flooding and historic flooding on several area rivers across the Nature Coast through the Tampa Bay region. Then, to the south of the landfall point, storm surge of 5 to 6 feet caused further damage in communities still recovering from Helene.



Bidding Fond Farewells

Over the course of the upcoming month, TBW will be losing 3 wonderful employees to different seasons of life. All have contributed greatly to the success of the office and will be missed!

Bobby Gianino: Electronics Technician - Retirement

Bobby joined the NWS in 2009 following a 21 year career in the United States Air Force and Air Guard. As an Electronics Tech, Bobby has worked tirelessly to maintain much of our equipment, especially the radar and the 9 ASOS sites across the CWA.

What's Next? "I have over 400 unbuilt plastic models, come 1 Jan 2025, I'll go to my stash and pick one to start building. I'll probably do lots of LEGO with my son. And I might do something in music! I have been invited to Nashville to record some rhythm guitar parts. I also foresee many Disney cruises in my future too."



Jennifer Pierson: Administrative Support Assistant - Transferring Agencies

Jennifer (JP) joined the National Weather Service in 2019 at the Greenville-Spartanburg, South Carolina office. She then transferred to TBW in 2020 and has helped to keep our office running ever since! She has also acted as a regional point of contact for travel coordination.

What's Next? "Even though I won't be with the NWS anymore, I will still be around the Tampa Bay area. I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed working at TBW, this has been an amazing work family."



Ali Davis: Meteorologist - Transferring Offices

Ali began her NWS career in 2022 with TBW after 10 years working in the private sector. Since coming to Florida, Ali has learned the ins and outs of NWS operations, become part of the Hydro Team here at the office, and worked as Editor of this newsletter!

What's Next? "I'm going to remain with the NWS, but will be transferring to the Wichita, KS office. Moving from Florida to Kansas might seem foreign to some, but it's home for me! I'm excited to be closer to family."

Administrative Team
Matt Anderson, AMIC, SOO
Steve Duaine, ESA
Jennifer Hubbard, WCM
Ross Giarratana, OPL/Met
Jennifer Pierson, ASA
Ernie Jillson, ITO/Met

Senior Meteorologists
Paul Close
Rick Davis, IMET
Nicole Carlisle
Tyler Fleming
Eric Oglesby

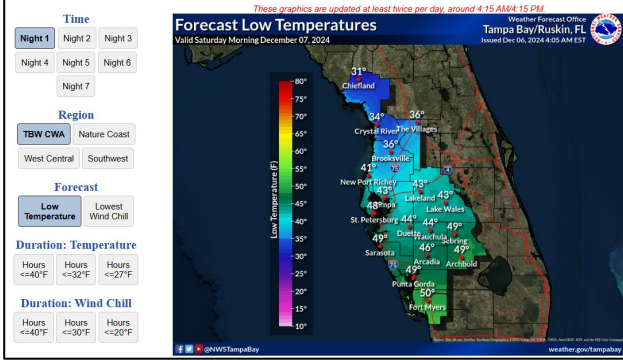
Meteorologists
Rodney Wynn
Stephen Shiveley
Keily Delerme
Tony Hurt
Austen Flannery
Christianne Pearce
Ali Davis

Electronics Technician Team
Bobby Gianino
Josh Campbell

Cold Weather Decision Support

Instructions: Select desired Time and Region, then choose a Forecast or Duration button to view image

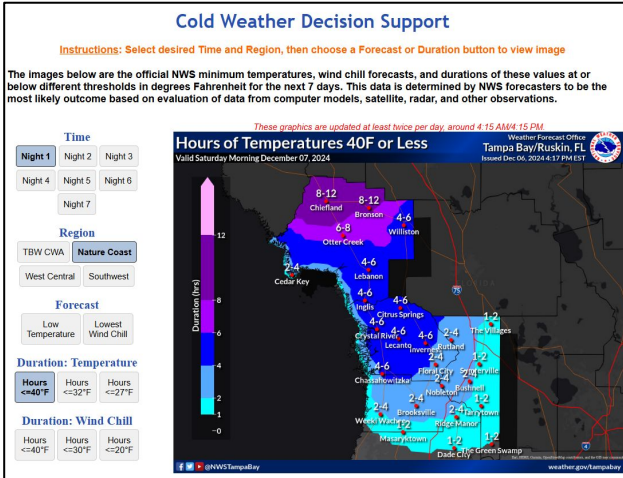
The images below are the official NWS minimum temperatures, wind chill forecasts, and durations of these values at or below different thresholds in degrees Fahrenheit for the next 7 days. This data is determined by NWS forecasters to be the most likely outcome based on an evaluation of data from computer models, satellite, radar, and other observations.



New Cold Weather Support Tools!

By: Paul Close

The NWS Tampa Bay webpage has new tools this winter to help with cold weather decision support. The new Cold Weather DSS page, which can be found at weather.gov/TBW/colddss, features a new interactive design that allows you to choose different zoom levels, map type, and duration graphics. For instance, if you want to know how long temperatures will be below 40 degrees across the Nature Coast on Night 4, just click on the desired buttons to generate your map! These maps are updated at least twice per day (4:15 am/pm).



Below the new graphics, the page also highlights the different types of watches, warnings, and advisories we might see during the winter months following the simplification of the cold weather product suite. Wind Chill Watch/Warnings have been consolidated into Extreme Cold Watch/Warning and the Wind Chill Advisory has been renamed to a Cold Weather Advisory. Specific Hard Freeze Watch/Warnings have been decommissioned but are mentioned within existing Freeze Watch/Warning products.



Upper Air Shelter Facelift - Part 2!

By: Ali Davis

In a significant step toward modernization, the dome atop the Upper Air Shelter has been successfully removed. This dome, which once housed the antenna for communicating with previous versions of radiosondes, had been a critical component of our weather observation system for many years. However, with the decommissioning of the previous radiosonde system in 2022, the dome became obsolete and no longer served its intended purpose.

The removal of the dome was carried out with great care and precision, ensuring that there was no disruption to ongoing balloon launches or the storage of hydrogen on-site. Special precautions were taken throughout the process to maintain safety, particularly given the sensitive nature of the equipment and materials in the area. The team worked tirelessly to ensure that the operation proceeded smoothly and without incident, protecting both our personnel and the infrastructure around the shelter.