



NOAA *Backgrounder*

NOAA Weather Radio: For Anytime Severe Weather Strikes

During the May 3, 1999 tornado outbreak in Oklahoma and Kansas, a supervisor at Norland Plastics in Haysville, Kansas saved more than 80 lives by responding to official National Weather Service warnings heard on the plant's NOAA Weather Radio. Shortly after instructing employees to move to the basement, a twister devastated the entire building. No one was hurt and Norland employees credit the warnings.

In cases like these, NOAA Weather Radio has meant the difference between life and death and has given its listeners confidence to react when severe, potentially life-threatening weather approaches.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation's seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

For further information: NOAA Office of Public Affairs, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6013, Washington, D.C. 20230. Phone: (202) 482-6090.

For tornadoes that erupt when most people are asleep, NOAA Weather Radio literally is a life-saver. Since 1998, three major night-time tornadoes have claimed nearly 100 lives—one in Central Florida, one in Birmingham, Ala., and the other in Georgia. In each of these episodes, NOAA Weather Radio, with its special alert features, helped to lessen the death toll.

In Georgia for instance, where it is not uncommon for tornadoes to occur out of the usual May-June peak season, Johnnie Wingers, Macon's Emergency Manager is never without his NOAA Weather Radio. "I have one in my car, my office, my house...everywhere I go," Wingers says. "You can't afford not to have it."

About NOAA Weather Radio

NOAA Weather Radio continuously broadcasts National Weather Service forecasts, warnings and other crucial weather information. The radios can be programmed to receive information specific to a certain area, using the Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME) feature, and can sound an alarm to alert users of approaching dangerous weather. NOAA Weather Radio is the lone government-operated radio system that provides direct warnings to the public for natural and man-made hazards, from floods to forest fires, to oil spills. It also is the primary trigger for activating America's Emergency Alert System on commercial radio and television stations.

NOAA Weather Radio Success Stories

When tornadoes ripped through parts of southwest Georgia during the overnight hours of February 14, 2000, killing 22 people and injuring many more, there were a few survivors who credited NOAA Weather

over, please

continued from previous page

Radio with waking them up in time to take cover.

A girl's basketball game in the Beebe High School gymnasium was suddenly halted at halftime after the town's school superintendent heard a tornado warning issued by the National Weather Service. NOAA Weather Radio's real-time updates indicated the tornado was moving in the direction of the school. Thirty minutes after the game was called, an F-3 tornado nearly leveled the gym. No one was injured because the facility was vacant.

Severe thunderstorms, covering 33 counties in central Pennsylvania, touched off a series of F-2 and F-3 tornadoes from May 31-June 2, 1998. Emergency managers, who heard official National Weather Service warnings broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and the Emergency Alert System, praised the advance notice the agency provided.

NOAA Weather Radio Evolves

In the 1950s, the old Weather Bureau—the forerunner of today's National Weather Service—began broadcasting aviation weather across two stations. In the 1960s, stations were added for the marine community

and by the late 1970s, the system included more than 300 stations. In the year 2001, with more than 600 transmitters, NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts cover over 90 percent of the nation. The broadcasts emanate from the 121 weather forecast offices around the country.

Console Replacement System and NOAA Weather Radio

Now, National Weather Service forecasts and warnings are heard the instant they are broadcast by meteorologists, without being rebroadcast over commercial airwaves, saving about 10 minutes. The Console Replacement System (CRS) speeds up the process even more by automatically translating the text of the forecast into a synthesized voice.

Where To Buy NOAA Weather Radios

NOAA Weather Radios are available at many retail stores that sell electronic appliances, marine supply stores, truck stops, cable shopping networks, mail-order catalogs and the Internet. Their costs range from \$20 to \$80 depending on the model. For more information about NOAA Weather Radio online, please visit our Web site at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr>. ☺

For more information contact National Weather Service Public Affairs at (301) 713-0622.