



THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management

SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS

By Mark D. Schneider

Get ready for North Dakota's upcoming summer severe weather season. The National Weather Service (NWS) has designated April 27 through May 1 as *Severe Summer Weather Awareness Week*. It's not easy remembering what the difference is between a watch and a warning or what weather conditions should be reported to your local Weather Forecast Office (WFO). A severe thunderstorm or tornado **"watch"** means that conditions are favorable for the development of thunderstorms capable of producing large hail, strong winds, and possible tornadoes. A severe thunderstorm or tornado **"warning"** means that severe thunderstorms have developed and either a report of severe weather has been made or there are radar indicated conditions present.

John Paul Martin, Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) for the Bismarck WFO wants North Dakotans to know that: "Wednesday, April 29, is the day you should designate for tornado preparedness, if you choose to do that. There will be no test warning messages sent by the NWS that day. We do encourage everyone to take time that day to practice tornado preparedness. Do you have a plan on where to go and what to do?"

In 2019, there were 15 confirmed tornadoes in our state and our annual average since 1950 is 22 tornadoes. We shouldn't forget that the most frequent reports of severe weather in the

summertime are wind and hail reports (wind speeds of 58 miles per hour or greater and hail one-inch in diameter or greater). You've likely heard the phrase *"Turn Around, Don't Drown"* when heavy or severe rainfall causes flooding of roads. Examples of this are city underpasses where drivers are uncertain of the waters' depth and they proceed through only to have their vehicle submerged in a potentially life-threatening situation.

Greg Gust, WCM for the Fargo-Grand Forks WFO emphasized the importance of reporting severe weather to the NWS through phone, online reporting through NWS websites, Facebook, or Twitter. The Fargo-Grand Forks WFO public phone number is (701) 772-0720 and the Bismarck WFO number is (701) 223-4582.

By reporting severe weather, you're helping warn North Dakotans "downwind" of your location of conditions that could be dangerous or harmful to them. Severe weather reports also help NWS forecasters verify their warnings so that "ground truth" of the actual conditions that are being displayed on the radar can be determined. So, if you observe significant or severe weather occurring this season, don't keep it to yourself...report it!

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