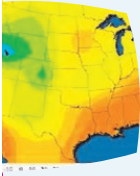




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# Tallahassee topics

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*

## Severe Weather Preparedness

By Katie Moore & Alex Lamers

Although the tornadoes in “Dixie Alley” tend to have lower maximum wind speeds than those in the Plains, they can be even deadlier. Many tornadoes that impact our area are rain-wrapped and often occur at night, obscuring people’s ability to see them coming. We also have more terrain and denser tree coverage than out in the Plains, which also makes them more difficult to see coming. Furthermore, more people live in mobile homes in Dixie Alley than in the Plains and most people in the south do not have basements or access to underground shelter.

The best time to create a severe weather safety plan is before weather strikes. Here are some tips for what to do before, during, and after a tornado.

### Before a Tornado

Create an emergency plan for your family and/or business. Make sure that you have a **sheltering location** selected, a **way to communicate** (texting is preferable to calling during emergencies), and a **meet up location** in case you get separated.

Have **at least three ways to get weather information** such as a NOAA weather radio, battery powered radio, cell phone, internet, or television. Keep in mind that cell phones can have weak signal and poor battery life and that cable, internet and power lines can all go down during storms.

Check if your phone is Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) capable at [www.ctia.org/wea](http://www.ctia.org/wea). If it is, make sure the alerts are enabled. Messages are free and could save your life!

Make sure you know the difference between watches and warnings- A **watch** means that conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather, so you should be **alert**. A **warning** means that severe weather is occurring and it’s time to **take action**.

### During a Tornado

**Get in** - get into a sturdy building and put as many walls between you and the outside as possible

**Get down** - get as low in the building as possible- the basement or the lowest floor

**Cover up** - use blankets, pillows, helmets, etc. to cover up and protect yourself

### After a Tornado

Continue to monitor weather information and cooperate fully with public safety officials.

Keep family together and wait for emergency personnel to arrive. Check for injuries and do not attempt to move seriously injured people unless they are in immediate danger.

Stay away from power lines and puddles with wires on them. Watch out for nails, broken glass and sharp objects.

If you are trapped, try to attract attention to your location- use a whistle or flashlight.

Check out our website with more detailed information and links to help your family prepare for severe weather: [http://www.srh.noaa.gov/news/display\\_cmsstory.php?wfo=tae&storyid=100736&source=2](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/news/display_cmsstory.php?wfo=tae&storyid=100736&source=2)





## Employee Spotlight: Alex Lamers

*Journeyman Forecaster since 2011*

*By Katie Moore & Alex Lamers*

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**Q: What got you interested in weather? Did your interest start at a young age?**

**A:** I became interested in weather from taking quite a few cross-country airplane trips as a kid, and visiting airports to see the different types of planes. Weather obviously plays a significant role in aviation, so my love of aviation turned into a love of weather. I enjoyed having the window seats on flights so I could stare out at clouds and geographical features. When I am presented with something new and unknown, I tend to be curious and like to find answers. So when I saw flight delays due to big winter storms, or thunderstorms, I naturally got curious and wanted to learn more! By the time I was 10 years old or so, I had the weather bug.

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

**A:** I first walked into a National Weather Service office when I was doing a weather-related project in 8th grade. I met some staff members at the office in Sullivan, WI and consulted with them on my project. After that, I began volunteering at the same office in high school, and was hired into the NWS through the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) in college. I owe a lot to the staff at NWS Sullivan for being very generous with their time and teaching me a lot about forecasting. It was a wonderful experience, and I hope to pay it forward by mentoring students in the future. I would strongly encourage meteorology students with an interest in the National Weather Service to inquire at their local office about volunteer opportunities!

**Q: You're the office social media guru. How do you see the NWS' use of social media evolving in the future?**

**A:** One of the key challenges and opportunities for the National Weather Service moving forward in the coming decades will be to communicate hazardous weather information as effectively as possible. Social media should continue to help the NWS by creating new ways to reach people with weather information. It has provided us a way to get additional, valuable information in real time, which can aid the forecast and warning process. However, it is just one tool in the communication toolbox and I'm

sure there will be other new and exciting technologies yet to be developed that will also enhance our ability to communicate. Remember that public access to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube is all just around a decade old. An exciting question to ask is: what yet undiscovered technology will exist a decade from now that will become an integral part of weather hazards communication?

**Q: What are your favorite and most challenging parts of your job?**

**A:** I would say the most challenging and favorite parts of my job are the same - making forecast and warning decisions with limited or conflicting information. Those are cases in which you really get to put your meteorological training to use. Not every forecast problem will have an obvious solution, and I enjoy the challenge of sorting that out. I would also have to add that mentoring meteorology students is another favorite part of my job. As I said, that played a key role in my professional development, so I enjoy teaching students about operational meteorology, forecasting, and life in the National Weather Service.

**Q: Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?**

**A:** I see myself still working for the National Weather Service as a meteorologist, perhaps as a lead forecaster. I have a wide variety of interests in the field of meteorology, and I enjoy experiencing different parts of the country, so I couldn't really pinpoint a location for you!

**Q: When you're not at work here, what do you like to do?**

**A:** I really enjoy traveling and seeing different parts of the country and the world! I actually just returned from a trip to Europe where I visited four cities in the United Kingdom, as well as Prague in the Czech Republic. It's always fascinating to learn about other cultures and see new things that I haven't seen before. I'm a weather nerd at heart, so I also enjoy following the weather from different parts of the world. Other than that, I enjoy watching sports, playing card and board games, and reading non-fiction books on a variety of topics.

## Winter Severe Weather & Flooding

*By Mark Wool*

It seems that every holiday season, some portion of the forecast area is impacted by severe weather. This season was no exception. In fact, the biggest severe weather and flooding event of the entire winter occurred just before Christmas on December 23rd-24th, 2014. There were several reports of large hail and flooding. A flooded Lake Ella in Tallahassee is pictured at right. Additional photos submitted from this event can be found at [http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tae/?n=event-20141223-24\\_photo\\_gallery](http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tae/?n=event-20141223-24_photo_gallery). A few days later, a very rare non-thunderstorm EF2 tornado occurred in Valdosta, GA, on December 29th. Unfortunately, nine people were injured by this tornado, which was the first to hit the city since 1997. The following weekend, two EF1 tornadoes touched down in Southwest GA on January 4th. Both were generated by the same parent thunderstorm. The first touched down outside of Omega, GA and resulted in minimal damage. The second caused a steeple to collapse while the church was full of worshippers. Fortunately, there were no injuries. There was little severe weather of note after that through the end of February.



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## This Quarter's Focus: NWS Tallahassee Marine Program

By Emma Weston & Mark Wool

The Marine program at WFO Tallahassee produces several different products and services. The coastal waters forecast is a five-day forecast for the Gulf of Mexico from Destin to the Suwannee River out to 60 nautical miles. The forecast consists of wind speed and direction, seas (wind wave and swell combined), wave period and weather (rain, thunderstorms, fog, etc). The coastal waters are often broken out into nearshore (out to 20 nm) and offshore (20-60 nm) zones. A small craft advisory is issued if the winds are expected to be 20 to 33 knots and/or seas of 7 feet or more. If conditions are different from the forecast, mariners can submit an online form that immediately lets the forecasters know, so they can make adjustments. The form can be found online at the following address: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/srh/marine/report/>

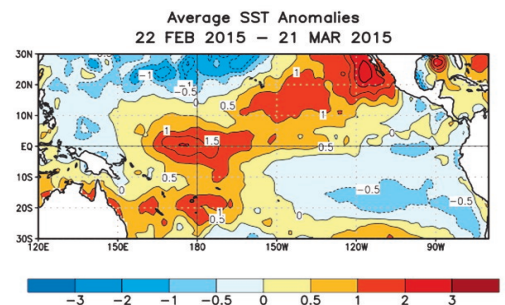
In addition to offshore waters, we also forecast the surf height for areas right along the coast. A high surf advisory is issued when the surf reaches 6 feet and a high surf warning is issued when the surf exceeds 10 feet. We use the surf height in addition to local meteorological knowledge to assess the rip current risk, which is detailed in the surf zone forecast.

If threatening conditions from thunderstorms are expected, a special marine warning (SMW) may be issued. The SMW is issued whenever thunderstorms are expected to produce wind gusts of 34 knots or greater, hail of 3/4" or larger, or waterspouts.

We are always looking to get feedback from mariners on our products and services. Feel free to use the aforementioned online form or give us a call if you have questions about the forecast.

## El Niño Update *By Mark Wool*

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) has issued an El Niño advisory as these conditions have now been confirmed across the equatorial Pacific. As of March 23rd, there was a 50-60% chance that El Niño would be present through the northern hemisphere's summer season. The presence of El Niño typically has a minimal impact on our local weather during the Spring. However, if El Niño conditions do persist through summer, they typically act to reduce overall tropical cyclone development across the Atlantic Basin as a whole. Unfortunately, that reduction does not appear to apply to the State of Florida to a statistically significant degree.



## Recent Office Staffing Changes

By Katie Moore

This January, Parks Camp was promoted from lead forecaster to Science and Operations Officer (SOO) and Mark Wool (pictured at right) was promoted from lead forecaster to Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM). Read our Employee Spotlight interview with Parks from our Summer 2014 issue [here](#). Congratulations Parks and Mark! We also welcomed student volunteer Coral Arroyo-Baez to the Tallahassee team. We currently have three student volunteers and will be interviewing more students later this month for a summertime volunteer position. Sadly, at the end of January, we said farewell to our Observation Program Leader (OPL), Jim Bolden. Jim retired after 32 years of service in the NWS and 8 years working as a meteorologist for the U.S. Air Force before that. Read our Employee Spotlight interview with Jim from our Spring 2013 issue [here](#). Enjoy your retirement Jim!





### Management-Admin Team

Jane Hollingsworth, MIC  
 Mark Wool, WCM  
 Parks Camp, SOO  
 Doug Sherrick, ESA  
 Chris Duggan, ASA  
 Toan Tran, ITO  
 Hydrologist (Vacant)

### Lead Forecasters

Vacant  
 Vacant  
 Ken Gould  
 Jeff Fournier  
 Vacant

### Journeyman Forecasters

Tim Barry  
 Kelly Godsey  
 Don Van Dyke  
 Alex Lamers  
 Donal Harrigan

### HMTs

OPL (Vacant)

### Interns

Katie Moore  
 Claudia (Jeanie) McDermott  
 Emma Weston

### Electronic Technicians

Ron Eimiller  
 Clifton Bennett

# Outreach Efforts

## By Katie Moore & Mark Wool

From science fairs to severe weather awareness weeks, this winter was a busy time for outreach. On Dec 17th, Mark Wool, Tim Barry, and Katie Moore were judges at the Thomas County High School science fair in Thomasville, GA. Mark also went up to Thomasville the day before to attend the Georgia Area 2 Emergency Manager's to discuss what has and has not been working well in terms of handling threats from potential severe weather. In February, the tri-state area celebrated three severe weather awareness weeks (SWAWs), which were Feb 2-6 in Florida and Georgia and Feb 16-20 in Alabama. For FL's SWAW, Emma Weston and Mark went to events at two Leon county libraries, working at a booth with weather safety information for area residents. On Feb 4th, WFO TAE participated in the statewide tornado drills for Florida and Georgia and on Feb 18th, we participated in Alabama's statewide tornado drill. On Feb 13th, Kelly Godsey conducted spotter training for new Leon County dispatchers and on the 17th, Kelly went to Thomasville to facilitate a Georgia Area 2 tabletop tornado exercise. On February 28th, Mark and Emma Weston presented at the 11th Annual Charts, Navigation and Weather Seminar at the MarineMax Marina in Panama City Beach, FL. Mark discussed the NWS marine forecast and warning program (pictured above), while Emma outlined operations at the National Data Buoy Center.



# Climate Recap for Winter

## By Tim Barry

The climate for Tallahassee during the 3-month period of December 2014 through February 2015 saw temperatures that were only slightly warmer than normal. The average temperature for winter was 53.6°F, 0.6°F above normal. December and January were warmer than normal and February was colder. January is on average our coldest month, but this winter February was the coldest with an average monthly temperature of 51.3°F, 3.4° below normal. The highest temperature recorded at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 81°F on December 3rd which tied the record high for the date. The lowest temperature was 22°F on February 20th, also a daily record and also our third and final hard freeze of the winter. The coldest maximum temperature was on Jan 8th with a high of only 43°F. The high temp of 45°F on February 19th established a new record low maximum for that date. The previous record was 46°F in 1910. There were 18 days with mini-

um temperatures at or below freezing this past winter, 6 below normal.

During winter, we normally see 13.09" of rain and this year we received 17.97". The months of January and February averaged near normal, so the entire seasonal surplus of 4.88" occurred in December. The total rainfall in December measured at the airport was 8.78" making it the 5th wettest December on record. Most of the rain, 7.95", occurred in the two day period just before Christmas on the 23rd-24th. A new daily rainfall record of 7.44" was observed on the 23rd. That is also the most rain that has fallen on any day during the month of December in Tallahassee's recorded history with records dating back to 1892. For the calendar year 2014, the total rainfall measured at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 68.47" which was 9.24" above normal.

# Outlook for Spring

## By Tim Barry

The latest outlook for spring (March through May) from the Climate Prediction Center calls for equal chances of experiencing above, below or near normal temperatures and an enhanced chance for experiencing above normal rainfall. (The outlooks to the right are for the month of April only.) The average temperature for Tallahassee during spring is 66.9 degrees and the average rainfall is 12.47 inches. So far, March has been drier and much warmer than normal.

