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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 the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the local economy.

Spring Weather Safety By Katie Moore

Meteorological spring runs from March 1 through May 31 (versus astronomical spring which runs from the Spring equinox to the Summer solstice, or March 20 to June 20 this year). During the spring months, our local area is impacted by thunderstorms, which can threaten life and property with lightning, tornadoes, damaging winds, large hail, and flooding. Springtime means an uptick in temperatures, and with that comes an increased risk in excessive heat. The uptick in temperatures also means more people flock to our Gulf beaches, which can have dangerous rip currents. Read on to learn how to prepare for these [springtime weather threats](#).

Thunderstorms: Lightning, Tornadoes, Winds, Hail

Thunderstorms, by nature, produce lightning. Lightning kills an average of 30 people every year. The best way to protect yourself from lightning is to get indoors as soon as you hear thunder. Heading inside is also the best way to safeguard yourself from tornadoes, damaging winds, and large hail.

A car with all the doors and windows closed can also be used as refuge from lightning, however, this is not an ideal safe place when a thunderstorm is producing tornadoes, damaging winds, or hail. Have a [basic disaster supply kit](#) located in your safe place and have (and communicate) a safety plan. See the image on the bottom left for what to include in your severe weather safety plan.

Tornadoes

If you receive a tornado warning, then your next step of action should be to get indoors and to the lowest level of the structure in an interior room (away from windows and exterior walls). You can also use a helmet, pillow, or mattress to help cover up your head. Get in, get down, cover up.

(Continued on page 3)

SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY PLAN
Three **basic** things everyone in your home or business should know...

- 1. Pick A Spot**




Find a safe normal sheltering location, and let everyone know that's where they should go during severe weather
- 2. How To Get In Touch**




Text rather than call
Everyone should know how to reach one another afterwards. In disasters, texting is often better than calling.
- 3. Choose a "Meet Up Spot"**

It's a good idea to have a standard meet up spot that everyone knows.

   @NWSTallahassee

When a TORNADO WARNING is Issued
"Get In, Get Down, Cover Up"

- 1. Get In**
Get into a sturdy building and put as many walls between you and the outside as possible.

- 2. Get Down**
Get as low in the building as possible – the basement or the lowest floor.

- 3. Cover Up**
Flying and falling debris are a storm's number one killer. Use pillows, blankets, helmets, etc. to cover up and protect yourself.


   @NWSTallahassee



Employee Spotlight: *Andy Lahr*

Journeyman Forecaster

By Katie Moore & Andy Lahr

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What got you interested in the weather?

I have been fascinated with weather since I was very young. Growing up in the St. Louis, MO area, I would frequently watch the Weather Channel and local news stations to see the latest forecast, especially when snow, ice, or severe thunderstorms were in the forecast. I was always excited to look out the window whenever snow was falling or thunderstorms were approaching.

Where did you study meteorology?

The first college where I studied meteorology was the University of Wisconsin - Madison, WI; I received a Bachelor's Degree in Atmospheric & Oceanic Science there. I also studied for two years at Florida State University, receiving a Master's Degree in Meteorology.

How did you get your start in the weather service?

While attending graduate school at FSU, I was accepted to the volunteer program here at the Tallahassee NWS office. Through this program, I learned valuable skills and gained experience in forecasting and other regular NWS duties. Largely thanks to this experience, I was hired as a Meteorologist Intern in the Twin Cities, MN office when I graduated from FSU. After two years in Minnesota, I was promoted to a General Forecaster position here in Tallahassee last summer.

What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of the job?

My favorite aspects of the job are issuing forecasts and creating graphics ahead of hazardous weather events (heavy rain, severe weather, tropical storms, etc.), and also issuing warnings for our area. I believe protection of life and property is our highest calling as NWS employees, and I take it very seriously but also enjoy knowing that what we do makes a difference in people's lives. My least favorite aspect of the job is working rotating shifts, but realize that it's a necessary part of our job in order to serve the public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You are the leader of NWS Tallahassee's Weather Ready Nation Ambassador initiative. What is your main goal with the program?

I want to expand this program to as many groups as possible, since the Weather-Ready Nation Initiative is a great way for local organizations to promote extreme weather preparedness. Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors can expand our message of being prepared for weather hazards to a wider audience than we typically reach, which is very important to me.

What do you like to do when you're off duty?

My hobbies include playing tennis and jogging on local trails, and I enjoy being active in my local church. I am also an avid baseball and hockey fan, rooting for the teams I grew up watching in St. Louis (Cardinals baseball & Blues hockey).

January Severe Weather Summary

By Katie Moore

The unofficial tornado season in the Tallahassee forecast area runs from November 1 to May 15, with a typical peak mid February through early April. While we can get tornadoes outside of this season, it is during this winter and spring period that we have our greatest risk for significant (EF-2 or higher) tornadoes. This January, within this seasonal window though outside its typical peak, the tri-state area saw 2 tornado outbreaks which produced a total of 8 significant tornadoes. On Monday January 2, 2017, a strong line of thunderstorms moved through southeast Alabama, southwest Georgia, and north Florida. This system produced 10 confirmed tornadoes, including 4 EF-2 tornadoes, as well as extensive straight-line wind damage across southeast Alabama and southwest Georgia. There were 5 fatalities directly related to 80-85 MPH straight line winds. Later in the month, we had a multi-day event with 3 distinct rounds of severe weather moving through the area, 2 of which produced tornadoes. Overall, we had 7 confirmed tornadoes between January 21-22, 2 of which were EF-2 and 2 of which were EF-3 tornadoes. There were 16 deaths from the 2 EF-3 tornadoes along with numerous injuries. To learn more about the deadly severe weather outbreaks, check out our websites for the [January 2 2017](#) and [January 21-22 2017](#) events. We also have an [in-depth write up of the synoptic and mesoscale environment](#) for the January 21-22 event.



Church in Worth county destroyed by a tornado on Jan 22, 2017

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NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

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Spring Weather Safety (Continued From Page 1)

By Katie Moore

Flooding

More than half of all flooding deaths are vehicle related. If you're approaching an area of road covered in water, turn around and don't walk or drive into it. It can be extremely difficult to gauge just how deep the water is. Just 6" of moving flood water can knock over an adult and 12" of moving water can carry a small car away. Two feet of moving water can carry away most vehicles.

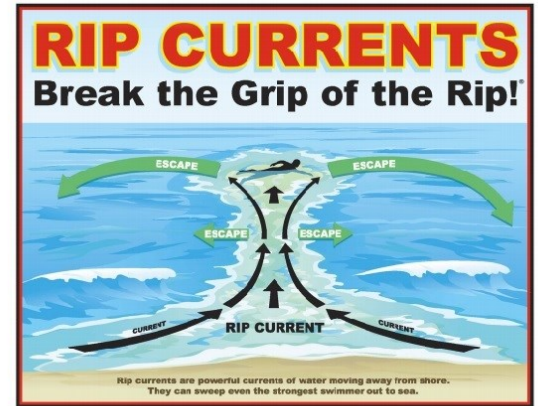
Heat

As temperatures increase, it's important to stay hydrated and recognize the signs of heat exhaustion. Signs of heat exhaustion include feeling faint or dizzy, excessive sweating, clammy skin, nausea, a rapid, weak pulse, and muscle cramps. If these symptoms occur, get to a cooler, air conditioned place, drink some water, and take a cool shower or use a cool compress. Heat strokes are even more dangerous and can be accompanied by a throbbing headache, red, hot, dry skin, and a rapid strong pulse. People suffering a heat stroke may lose consciousness. If you recognize these symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately and take actions to keep the person cool until help arrives. Cars heat up fast and the temperatures inside can quickly become deadly. Never leave children or pets unattended in vehicles.

Rip Currents

If you're headed to the beach, make sure you take note of what color beach flag is flying. Red flags mean that dangerous rip currents are present and you should not enter the water. When double red flags are flying, the beaches are closed. If you do get caught in a

rip current, swim parallel to the shore until you escape the current's pull. Once you're free from the pull of the current, swim at an angle away from the current toward the shore.



IF CAUGHT IN A RIP CURRENT

- ◆ Don't fight the current
- ◆ Swim out of the current, then to shore
- ◆ If you can't escape, float or tread water
- ◆ If you need help, call or wave for assistance

Practice HEAT SAFETY Wherever You Are

Heat related deaths are preventable. Protect yourself and others from the impacts of heat waves.

Job Sites
Stay hydrated and take breaks in the shade as often as possible.

Indoors
Check up on the elderly, sick and those without AC.

Vehicles
Never leave kids or pets unattended - LOOK before you LOCK

Outdoors
Limit strenuous outdoor activities, find shade, and stay hydrated.

weather.gov/heat

The End of the 2016 La Niña

By Jeff Fournier

The La Niña pattern which began last summer has ended. La Niña, that part of the oscillating water temperature cycle in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, is defined by abnormally cool waters in that region. This cycle often corresponds to above-average temperatures for our area in the winter, as well as below-average precipitation. This pattern is also favorable for an above-average number of tropical cyclones in the Atlantic basin, provided other factors are favorable as well.

Does this mean the opposite of La Niña- El Niño, is imminent? This is a natural question to ask since the pattern oscillates between the two phases. El Niño features warmer-than-normal water temperatures in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, which typically corresponds to below-average temperatures during the winter for our region, as well as below-average temperatures. As is the case with La Niña, the associated seasonal anomalies during the summer months for our region are usually negligible, except that El Niño is often associated with a below-average number of tropical cyclones in the Atlantic Basin.

Forecasts for El Niño/La Niña are made using a combination of statistical methods and special numerical weather prediction models. Unfortunately transitions between these two patterns tend to be poorly forecast during the spring. Nevertheless, forecasters expect "neutral" conditions (i.e. neither El Niño or La Niña) through early summer, followed by an increasing chance of El Niño conditions late summer through fall. Given the uncertainty, it is too early to speculate on whether or not a late summer or early fall developing El Niño will significantly impact the upcoming Atlantic hurricane season.



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Outreach Efforts

By Mark Wool

On February 18th, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Mark Wool (2nd from right) and Marine Focal Point, Emma Weston, (far right) joined Tim Osborne, Navigation Manager of NOAA's Office of Coast Survey (center) and Dr. Wil Hugli, Instructor for the U.S. Power Squadron's Ft. Walton District (far left) at the MarineMax Marina in Panama City Beach for the 13th Annual Marine Weather & Navigation seminar hosted by Bob Fowler, MarineMax Sales Consultant and Broker (2nd from left). This seminar is a unique example of a long-standing public-private partnership that promotes safety on the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent waters. The National Weather Service focused on how to obtain and interpret our marine forecasts, how to report adverse marine weather to the NWS and how to interpret data from the National Data Buoy Center. The seminar was well-received and one we look forward to participating in every year.



Other outreach efforts over the winter included our support for three separate Severe Weather Awareness Weeks and storm survey work for two major tornado outbreaks covered elsewhere in this newsletter. We also formally recognized Florida A&M University as a [StormReady](#) community with a ceremony on the steps of Lee Hall on the brisk morning of January 9th.

Climate Recap for Winter

By Tim Barry

The climate for Tallahassee during the 3-month period of December 2016 through February 2017 saw temperatures that were much warmer than normal. The average temperature for winter was 59.9°F, 7.1°F above normal making it the third warmest winter on record for Tallahassee. All three months were warmer than normal with February being the warmest at 62.1°F, 7.4°F above normal. The highest temperature recorded at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 83°F on February 24th and 28th. There were two records broken; 82°F on Christmas Day and 82°F on February 12th. There were also two temperature records tied; 80°F on January 18th and 83°F on February 24th. The lowest temperature was 23°F on January 9th. The coldest maximum temperature was on Jan 8th with a high of only 47°F. There were nine days with minimum temperatures at or below freezing this past winter, 15 below normal.

During winter we normally see 13.09" of rain and this year we received 14.13". While this past winter was wetter than normal, it is a bit misleading. Almost half of the rain (6.94") recorded at the airport occurred in three combined 24-hour periods. The greatest amount in one of those 24-hr periods was 3.05" on January 2nd - 3rd. January was the wettest month with 7.21" and was also stormy with a few severe weather events that brought strong tornadoes to our area. A new daily record rainfall of 2.48" was observed on December 5th breaking the previous record of 2.10" in 1904. For the calendar year 2016, the total rainfall measured at the Tallahassee Regional Airport was 59.82" which was 0.59" above normal. The peak wind gust recorded at the airport was 54 mph from the west on February 7th.

Climate Outlook for Spring

By Tim Barry

The latest outlook for spring (March through May) from the Climate Prediction Center calls for an enhanced chance for experiencing above normal temperatures and equal chances of experiencing above, below or near normal rainfall. The average temperature for Tallahassee during spring is 66.9 degrees and the average rainfall is 12.47 inches. The current El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) cycle across the eastern Pacific is neutral and is expected to remain neutral through the spring of 2017. The ENSO cycle has little impact on our local weather during the spring.

