

# NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE FORECAST OFFICE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service Forecast Office (<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun>) in Norman, Okla., prepares and disseminates life-saving warnings, watches and advisories for all types of hazardous weather conditions affecting 56 counties, 48 in central, western and southern Oklahoma and eight in western north Texas. In addition to providing services to protect life and property, the office also produces a wide variety of forecasts, and collects and disseminates climatological and hydrologic data and observations.

The office, which was established in Oklahoma City in 1890 and moved to Norman in 1987, is part of the Southern Region of the National Weather Service and is one of 122 offices serving the nation. Meteorologists are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and forecast a variety of weather phenomena, from tornadoes to ice storms, heat waves and flash floods. An average 50 tornadoes occur in the Norman WFO's service area each year. Historically, a violent (F4-F5) tornado occurs in the area about every three years. Out of the approximate 10,000 tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings for individual counties issued by the NWS annually, over 1,000 come from the Norman office alone.

## Awards

The Norman WFO and individuals working in the office have received many awards, including two prestigious Gold Medals, a Silver Medal and numerous Bronze Medals from the Department of Commerce. In 2003, Meteorologist-in-Charge Mike Foster and Science Operations Officer David Andra were part of the Weather Event Simulator Concept and Development Team awarded a Gold Medal for their work in creating nationwide simulation training capabilities for NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) forecasters. The office was recognized with a Gold Medal in 2000 for providing lifesaving weather warnings and other services during an outbreak of violent tornadoes on May 3, 1999. A Silver Medal was presented to the office in 1992 for major contributions involving the modernization of the National Weather Service.

## Observations

The WFO is one of approximately 80 upper air observing sites in the nation. Technicians launch weather balloons twice a day to gather atmospheric conditions including temperature, wind speed and direction, pressure and humidity.

Climatological information is provided by volunteer co-op observers at 211 stations throughout the service area, the largest program of its kind in the NWS. The office provides maintenance support for each of the stations. Automatic Surface Observing Systems provide additional information about current climatological conditions.

## Public Service

The Norman WFO conducts numerous public service and outreach activities throughout the year. Everyday, the public phone line is answered from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Forecasters give about 40 spotter training sessions each year, reaching approximately 2,500 storm spotters in Oklahoma and Texas. In addition, they provide about 20 public safety talks to schools and community groups annually.

