Denton County SKYWARN™ Guidelines

Emergency traffic, tornadic activity or weather that is an imminent threat to life and/or property has top priority.

Repeater Operations during a Skywarn Net:

NOTE: When the repeater announces WEATHER WATCH, this indicates that severe weather is possible but there is not an active net. The repeater is still in an informal status.

During a Skywarn event, the Denton 146.92 is the primary repeater for all Skywarn operations. The 145.17 W5FKN repeater serves as the backup repeater.

- The National Weather Service Radio Operator has top priority with the exception of a report that includes a threat to life and/or property. If you hear WX5FWD or Weather Service make a call on the repeater, stand by.
- Allow the courtesy tone on the repeater you are using to complete or you can prevent a station making a report or alerting net control to emergency traffic.
- Wait ½ second after you press PTT to start your report.
- Do not tail gate or quick key. Tail gating/quick keying creates two issues.
    - Stations with emergency traffic may not be able to be heard by Net Control.
    - A quick key or tailgate event can cause life or death traffic to be delayed.
- Allowing the courtesy tone to execute allows weak signal stations or stations with priority traffic to check in to the net and post a report.
- Both the 146.92 and 145.17 repeaters go to a single tone courtesy tone instead of 3 tones. A triple tone indicates normal operation. A single tone indicates an ARES net.
- A quiet repeater is a huge asset. It makes it easier to place a report or for the NWS to contact the NCS directly.

How to place a report to an active net:

1. Position report information. Your location report shall consist of the following:
    a. Your location and proximity to the nearest city or town.
        i. Example "I am 3 miles east of Denton on HWY 380"
        ii. Example "I am 1 mile south of the City of Corinth."
    b. Avoid giving street intersections that are in towns. The NWS will not have knowledge of those streets and the NCS may or may not. It causes time to be sent looking on maps that do not have radar data.
    c. The NWS does not have Farm Market roads on their map, only cities and towns.

2. Do not key up yet. Think about your report at this point in time. Get if formed in your head. Thinking while transmitting is a serious problem.
3. If the repeater is active, wait for the courtesy tone on the repeater you are using to complete. The courtesy tone is different than the repeater unkeying.

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4. Give your callsign. Wait to be acknowledged.
5. K ey up and wait ½ second after you press PTT to start your report. If net control needs clarification, net control will ask what they need to know to complete the report. Be prepared to repeat the entire report in case the NWS asks for the last report given. Examples of a complete report is:
    a. "This is KC5GOI, I am 3 miles west of Denton on HWY 380, I have golf ball sized hail. KC5GOI."
    b. "This is WB5NZV, I am 4 miles west of Krum. I have a lowering to my north east. I do not see rotation at this time. WB5NZV"
    c. "This is KD5JOY, I am on the south side of the City of Justin. I see a tornado to my north west. KD5JOY"
6. Your report is accepted when Net Control acknowledges your report.
7. Please be ready to repeat your report or provide more information. Depending on what you report, the NCS or NWS may ask questions.

Operational guides:

- Watch the level of your voice when you give your report.
    a. if you are speaking to loudly it causes audio problems.
    b. If you are a weak signal station, it makes understanding a report even more difficult as you could be knocking yourself out of the repeater.
- If net control states there is a problem with understanding your report, audio issue, not making the repeater, etc. Please improve your location before trying again. The only exception is if you have an imminent threat to life and property. If you are told three times, check out of the net. You are eating up time on the air.
- BREAK BREAK is to be used **only** for an imminent threat to life or property.

Note: This is copied directly from the NWS Basic Storm Spotters guide.

Many types of weather information are needed from storm spotters; however, some types of information are much more important than others. Strict adherence to the reporting criteria allows vital information to be communicated as soon as possible.   Also, some of the reporting criteria should receive higher priority communication than others. Consider the following the default minimum reporting criteria. You should report the following weather events.

Urgent Priority

- Tornado
- Funnel cloud
- Rotating wall cloud
- Flash flooding

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High Priority

- Hail 3/4-inch diameter or larger
- Wind speed greater than 58 mph
- Persistent non-rotating wall cloud
- Rainfall 1 inch or more per hour

Lower Priority

- Hail 1/2-inch diameter or larger (the NCS may lower to pea size if needed).
- Wind speed greater than 40 mph
- Cloud features suggesting storm organization
- Other locally-defined criteria

NOTE: When reporting 1/2-inch diameter hail, do not use the term "marble" since marbles can come in a variety of sizes. In areas prone to severe weather, some offices may not need reports of 1/2-inch hail.

Net control has the authority to modify the reporting criteria as needs dictate. This can be either the addition of or reduction in restrictions.

Information not required for reports:

- Clear Sky reports
- Level of lightning activity
- Rate of rain fall.
- City siren's unless the city asks for verification purposes.

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Information <u>NOT</u> permitted:

- Reports of weather you have heard from the media, over a scanner or citizens. These types of reports are not always from trained spotters. The NWS will ask us to confirm a citizen or a law enforcement report if required.
- Repeating media reports is redundant at best. All it does is eat up time.
- Your interpretation of a radar scan. You can use the radar in the field but the NWS interprets the radar. If you are in the field spotting, and report what you see on the radar you have on your phone or PC, you may not be paying enough attention to your surroundings and put your safety at risk. NCS uses it for placement.

Activity that is not appropriate for a Net:

- Troubleshooting of technical problems. If you know you are having issues with your equipment or are advised of it. Take your station off the frequency in use and troubleshoot the problem on a discrete frequency or at another time.

- Announcements of non-event related activity.

- Asking if a Net is in progress. If in doubt, exercise the "Release to Listen" method. Listen for either Net control to state a net is in progress or for the repeater to announce it.

- Deviating from minimum reporting criteria. Clear sky, lightning, light winds, media reports or scanner derived reports are NOT wanted. The NWS has specifically stated that they do not want rates of rainfall reports. They are notoriously inaccurate. Flash flooding reports will be requested at the appropriate time. If you come up on a roadway that is blocked/impassable, report it if barricades are not in place. It does not take much of a difference in water flow to sweep a vehicle like a Suburban or a ¾ ton truck of the road compared to a Smart car. The size of a vehicle is irrelevant. If you drive through it, DO NOT report it as a road blockage.

- If you are not in or will not be able to get to the area of concern in a reasonable time, DO NOT CHECK IN. If you can get to the area(s) of concern but it requires some extended drive time (excess of 15 minutes), do not check into the net until you are in the area of concern. Checking in for checking in sake creates unneeded traffic and can impede the flow of relevant information. Denton County ARES does not keep track of who joins a net for record keeping.

- Circumventing Net control for placement of spotters. While it is recommended that you use your best judgment when spotting, let Net Control set the guidelines. You have been placed where you are for a reason.

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- If the NCS is in the process of receiving a report, allow Net control to finish the exchange before you try to contact Net Control. If a correction to a report is required, let the report be completed before contacting Net Control to make a correction.

- Profanity.

The goal for Skywarn nets is to gather and send relevant weather event data as observed by trained spotters to the National Weather Service. The collection of this data needs to happen in a timely fashion with minimal delays. This information is used to issue local weather warnings. Those warnings can potentially save people's lives or keep them from getting hurt. Delaying the data flow is similar to delaying an emergency vehicle from getting to the hospital. The more advanced notice the NWS and local emergency management have in the activation of sirens, barricade placement etc, increases our value as volunteers. The time we use incorrectly could causes delays in warnings or cause a warning to expire or be canceled.

Your participation as a volunteer is greatly appreciated.

These guidelines are intended to help make the nets run smoothly and get needed information to the correct people. The more professional we appear in operation improves our value to the public and government agencies. While Amateur is in our title, behaving amateurish is a detriment to that value.

ARES Pager Notification:

To be able to receive pager based notifications of Skywarn or ARES events, you will be required to be an active ARES member. You do not have to be a member of Denton County ARES to place a Skywarn report to a Denton County ARES Skywarn net.

On behalf of Denton County ARES, we thank you for your cooperation and participation in Skywarn and other ARES activities.

Guy Story KC5GOI
Denton County ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator

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