

# Denton County Skywarn Guidelines

## **Denton County SKYWARN™** **Guidelines**

The reason for SKYWARN nets is to gather and send relevant weather event data as observed by trained spotters to the National Weather Service(NWS). 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, the better we are at doing our jobs as volunteers. 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.

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

### Repeater Operations during a Skywarn Net:

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

1. 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.
2. Do not quick key or tailgate another station. Wait ½ second after you press PTT to start your report.
3. Do not tail gate or quick key. Doing so creates two issues. First, 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.

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4. 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.
5. 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.
6. When the repeater announces WATCH, this indicates that severe weather is a possibility but there is not an active net. The repeaters are still informal status.

## How to place a report to an active net:

1. Wait for the courtesy tone on the repeater you are using to complete.
2. Give your callsign. **Wait** to be acknowledged.
3. When you are acknowledged by net control, give your location (use major street intersection only, not a MAPSCO grid). If you are on the interstate or a Farm Market road, please give the direction of travel and your last known mile marker. Tell net control what you are observing and then your full callsign. **Keep the report short and concise.** Think about what you are going to report before you key up and place the 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 incase the NWS asks for the last report given.
4. Your report is accepted when Net Control acknowledges your report.
5. Let net control process an existing report before you try to place a report. Please do not grab the mic and start to make report without listening to existing traffic.

## Operational guides:

1. Watch the level of your voice when you give your report, if you are speaking too loudly it causes audio problems. 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.
2. 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.
3. BREAK BREAK is to be used only for an imminent threat to life or property.

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## Severe Weather Reporting Criteria

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. You should report the following weather events.

### Urgent Priority

1. Tornado
2. Funnel cloud
3. Rotating wall cloud
4. Flash flooding

### High Priority

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

### Lower Priority

1. Hail 1/2-inch diameter or larger
2. Wind speed greater than 40 mph
3. Cloud features suggesting storm organization
4. 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.

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## Information not required for reports:

Clear Sky reports  
Level of lightning activity

## Information **NOT** permitted:

Reports of weather you have heard from the media, law enforcement or citizens. These types of reports are not always from trained spotters. Repeating media reports is redundant at best. All 3 of these can prevent emergency traffic from being passed to the appropriate people. Please do not relay this type of information. The only purpose this serves is to delay the net. Net control has the authority to dispatch someone to verify a citizen or law enforcement report.

## Activity that is not appropriate for a Net:

1. 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.
2. Announcements of non-event related activity.
3. 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.
4. 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 reports of rainfall. 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. If you drive through it, DO NOT report it as a road blockage.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. If Net control 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.
8. Profanity.

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## 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.

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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