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SEVERE LOCAL STORM WARNING AND EVENT SUMMARIES AVAILABLE IN AFOS

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NOAA TECHNICAL MEMORANDA

National Weather Service National Severe Storms Forecast Center

The National Severe Storms Forecast Center (NSSFC) has the responsibility for the issuance of severe thunderstorm and tornado watches for the contiguous 48 states. Watches are issued for those areas where thunderstorms are forecast to produce one or more of the following: (1) hailstones of 3/4inch diameter or greater, (2) surface wind gusts of 50 knots or greater, or (3) tornadoes.

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- No. 5 The Operational Meteorology of Convective Weather Volume I: Operational Mesoanalysis. Charles A. Doswell III, November 1982, 160 p. (PB83 162321).

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SEVERE LOCAL STORM WARNING AND EVENT SUMMARIES AVAILABLE IN AFOS

by

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ABSTRACT. Verification of severe local storm warnings issued by National Weather Service offices is performed at the National Severe Storms Forecast Center (NSSFC). In association with collection of issued warnings and event reports, two products are routinely disseminated nationally via the AFOS network. A summary of severe local storm event reports received during the previous 24 hours (CCCSTADTS) is prepared daily. Once each week, a summary (CCCSTAXXX) is prepared for each WSFO. This summary lists events and warnings processed during the previous week for all stations within the management area of that WSFO.

Routine review of these messages by local offices will facilitate both local compilation of storm data and quality control of information entering data bases maintained at the NSSFC. For the purpose of encouraging routine use of these AFOS products, this report describes their content, outlines their role in verification and offers aids for their decoding.

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the national forecast verification program of the National Weather Service (NWS), the National Severe Storms Forecast Center (NSSFC) in Kansas City, Missouri performs verification of all severe local storm warnings issued in the United States (NWS, 1982). Increased needs for verification results by local, regional and national management has produced increased demands for timely verification reports. This, in turn, has increased demands for timely, accurate and detailed compilation of warnings and severe local storm reports that are used in verification procedures. In order to both encourage interaction among persons involved in the verification efforts and facilitate quality control of the data bases, two products are routinely transmitted via the AFOS network. This report reviews the contents of these messages and discusses their role in the ongoing severe local storm warning verification program.

2. DATA COLLECTION

The first step in verification of severe local storm warnings is collection of both the issued warnings and the reports of events that will verify the need for warnings. Collection of warnings is accomplished almost entirely on a real-time basis via AFOS. Although reports of severe local storm occurrences are received from many sources, a high percentage of these are extracted from statements, warnings, observations, local storm reports, state weather summaries, etc., received via AFOS. Others are obtained from telephone conversations, letters and newspaper reports. Finally, the monthly summaries entitled "Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena" (Form F-8) are consulted.

To qualify as a valid severe local storm event, and thus be included in the event data base, reports must clearly satisfy one of the criteria listed in Table 1. For logging purposes, two or more qualifying reports of the same type (Table 1) that are within 10 statute miles and 15 minutes of each other and in the same county will be considered as one However, tornadoes, officially observed severe conevent. vective wind gusts and events having associated extreme damage, injuries or fatalities will not be limited by the time and distance criteria. Note that funnel clouds are not included, and thus will not verify a severe local storm warning. If a range of convective wind gusts are reported, an average value is used. Examples of significant wind damage include: shallow-rooted trees pushed over, chimney damage, large tree limbs blown down, roof surfaces peeled back, and downed power lines. Only reports specifically stating the type of event, the geographical location and the time of occurrence can be assured of proper notation in the event data base.

3. SUMMARIES AVAILABLE VIA AFOS

The increased emphasis on severe local storm warning verification has led to increased reliability in data col-

TABLE 1 CRITERIA FOR SEVERE LOCAL STORMS

Tornado: funnel or circulation touching ground.

Hail: equal or greater than 3/4 inch (dime-size) in diameter.

Convective wind gusts of at least 50 knots (58 mph).

Significant wind damage from convective wind gusts.

WOUSØØ KMKC 21Ø931	
NSSFC TORNADO AND SEVERE THUNDERSTORM REPORTS	
FOR Ø6CST SUN NOV 20 1983 THRU Ø6CST MON NOV 21	1983
EVENT LOCATION REMARKS	(CST)TIME
1 *TORN SAN MATEO FL (41 E GNV)	1228
NONE	
2 TORN TURIN GA (25 SSW ATL)	141Ø
TWO ROOFS BLWN OFF. AUTOS DAMGD.	
3 TORN 1 N (CSG)CSG METRO ARPT GA (1 N CSG)	135Ø
TWO INJURIES, TREES AND POWER LINES DOWN	
4 *TORN COCOA FL (12 SSE TIX)	1417
	1010
D TURN ID W (VKB)VKB MUNI AKPI FL (18 W VKB)	1318
NUNE 6 0275 OF NME (ATLANTA INTLADDT CA (1 CH OVM)	1404
U ACTO SO MME (ATL)ATLANTA INTE ARPT GA (T SW ZVM)	143Ø
	1525
NONE	1727
8 TORN 23 SSW (WRB)ROBINS AFR GA (29 SSW MCN)	1620
NONF	1020
9 WNDG 4 W HAWKINSVILLE GA (22 WNW 07.1)	1650
BARN AND UTILITY BLDG DMGD	
10 WNDG 7 NE HAWKINSVILLE GA (15 NW 07J)	.1710
CARPORT DAMAGED	

Figure 1. Example of product CCCSTADTS, which is transmitted daily via AFOS.

lection procedures. Even so, errors or emissions do occur. In such cases, corrections are vitally important if accurate verification is to be accomplished. Rapid corrections to warning or event data ensure proper credit in verification summaries, lessen the workload of the verification focal point at field stations, and reduce both duplication of effort and computer time required to maintain the data bases at the NSSFC. However, increasing automation of data base management has required constraints to be placed on the timeliness of acceptable corrections.

Two messages are routinely transmitted from the NSSFC via the Automation of Field Operations and Services (AFOS) network for the purposes of aiding both compilation of local warning and event histories and rapid correction of the NSSFC data bases. Both are national products (thus available to all stations) which contain verification data recently compiled at the NSSFC.

The first message, having an AFOS PIL heading of "CCCSTADTS" is transmitted daily prior to 1200 GMT. It summarizes all severe local storm reports that have been received in real time at the NSSFC during the previous 24 hours. Figure 1 is an example from November 21, 1983. The type of severe weather event is coded as shown in Table 2. Also included are event locations, times of occurrence, and any remarks describing damage or significant facts concerning the events. Reports are numbered chronologically. All times are given in Central Standard Time (CST). An asterisk (*) preceding an event indicates that it occurred within a valid severe local storm watch.

second message, having an AFOS PIL heading Α of "CCCSTAXXX" (where XXX is the WSFO node identifier) is transmitted on Tuesday of each week prior to 1200 GMT. This message is composed of two sections. The first section is a summary of all severe local storm events noted and entered in real time into the NSSFC data base for all stations within the indicated WSFO's administrative area of responsibility during the previous week. The second section is a summary of all severe local storm warnings issued by stations in the indicated WSFO's administrative area during the previous week and processed at the NSSFC. Fifty-four of these messages are disseminated each week. An example is given in Figure 2. Occasionally, warnings will not be processed at the NSSFC during the week in which they are issued. In such a case, these warnings will be noted in "CCCSTAXXX" as soon as processing is completed.

TABLE 2 Contractions Used to Denote Severe Local Storm Events in "CCCSTADTS"

- TORN Tornado (verified or reported)
- WNDG Significant wind damage
- GSSS Convective wind gust: SSS is gust speed in knots. Ex. GØ75 indicates gust of 75 knots.
- ADDD Hail and size: DDD is hail diameter in hundreths of an inch. Ex. Al75 indicates hail of 1.75 (1 3/4) inches in diameter.

WOUSØØ KMKC Ø81Ø59??SOU ATTENTION SAT

SUMMARY OF SEVERE WEATHER REPORTED TO SELSFOR PERIODOCT 31 1983 NOV Ø6 1983DATETIMESTATE/RESPEVENTLOCATION SOURCE OF RPT AZRAN RADARMODAYRCSTCOUNTYUSOLATLONG OFFICE/MSG/DGMNDGMN11Ø183143ØTX167GLSTORNADO2923Ø9447GLS/WRNGWRNGØ4Ø/Ø12AUS

****THE FOLLOWING WARNINGS HAVE BEEN PROCESSED**** 8311 1 GLS 1435 1535 3 48167 1 8311 6 BRO 93Ø 1Ø3Ø 5 48215 1 8311 6 BRO 950 1050 5 48 61 1 48489 1 8311 6 BRO 1050 1150 5 48 61 1 48489 1 8311 6 BRO 1Ø55 1155 1 48 61 1 8311 6 AUS 1700 1800 6 48491 1 8311 6 AUS 1715 183Ø 6 48453 1 48 21 1 8311 6 AUS 1737 183Ø 5 48453 1 48 21 1 8311 6 AUS 1830 1930 5 48453 1

GUST SPEED IN KT. HAIL IN INCHES RANGE IN N. M. PREPARED BY NSSFC /KCMO.

Figure 2. Example of product CCCSTAXXX transmitted weekly (for each WSFO area of responsibility) via AFOS.

TABLE 3 DECODING AID FOR WARNING INFORMATION IN CCCSTAXXX

Coded line from Fig. 2:

~	YYMMDD	WWW	HHMM	KKNN	Т	SSCCCPP	SSCCCPP
a	8311Ø6	BRÓ	1Ø5Ø	115Ø	5	48ø61ø1	48489Ø1

<u>Code</u>	<u>Example</u>	Meaning	Decoding Reference
ΥY	83	Year - 1983	
MM	11	Month - November	
DD	Ø6	Day - 6	
. WWW	BRO	Brownsville, TX	FAA Station Identifiers
рННWМ	1Ø5Ø	Beginning time of warning	Table A.1
KKNN	115Ø	Ending time of warning	Table A.1
Ţ	5	Type of warning (Severe Thunderstorm-Radar)	Table A.2
SS	48	State number - Texas	FIPS PUB 5-1
J000	61	County number - Cameron	^e FIPS PUB 6-3
ЧРР	Øl	Porton of county warned - Whole county	Table A.3

^aWithin-group blanks are equivalent to zeros.

^bAll times are Central Standard Time (CST). Conversion to other times are given in Table 1 of Appendix A.

^CUp to six state/county groups (SSCCCPP) are allowed on each line. If more than six are needed, subsequent lines are used.

^dCurrently, most values of PP will be "l", indicating entire counties.

^ePublished by National Bureau of Standards. See References.

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In order to reduce computer processing and transmission times, these messages are coded. Information contained in the first section is denoted as column headings across the top of the message. Among data included are month, day, year, time, state, representative WSO, source office and closest radar site in conventional notations. All times are CST. Additionally, the geographical location of each event is given both by latitude and longitude (degrees and minutes) and by azimuth (degrees) and range (nautical miles) from the nearest NWS radar site. Hail size and wind gusts are coded as in Table 2. States and counties are denoted by standard identifying numbers (NBS; 1970, 1979). The second section is coded as indicated in Table 3. Tables in Appendix A can provide additional aid in decoding of these summaries.

4. ROLE OF AFOS MESSAGES IN VERIFICATION EFFORT

Both messages discussed in the previous section are available for collection and review by all field offices connected via the AFOS network. If several versions are simultaneously retained, personnel who work variable schedules can be assured an opportunity to review warnings and events while still familiar with a particular situation. Also, pertinent daily and weekly summaries can be compared. Such a procedure provides a convenient means of quality control of the national severe local storm data base, which is maintained at the NSSFC. Any corrections or additions to data concerning events other than tornadoes should be noted and mailed to the NSSFC². Changes to information regarding tornadoes should be made only via the "Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena" (Form F-8). Corrections or additions to warnings issued should also be mailed to the NSSFC, and must include a "hard copy" of each warning message. This copy is required for inclusion in the Warning Message File maintained at the NSSFC.

Significant improvements in verification data base contents can be achieved through routine review of both "CCCSTADTS" and "CCCSTAXXX" messages. Correct, timely and useful verification reports can result when initial severe

¹ Retention of several versions can be accomplished by use of the "VERSION PURGE" option in the AFOS.

² Address: Verification Specialist, National Severe Storms Forecast Center, Room 1728, Federal Building, 601 E. 12th Street, Kansas City, Missouri 64106.

local storm reports and, in the cases of errors, corrections are forwarded to the NSSFC as soon as operationally possible. Additionally, information compiled from these AFOS messages will be helpful in preparation of "Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena" (Form F-8) by local offices at the end of each month. Such a cooperative effort, coupled with frequent communication among all persons involved in verification, will be mutually beneficial.

5. RELATED AFOS PRODUCTS

The NSSFC compiles additional data concerning tornadoes and distributes them via two other AFOS messages. Tornado occurrences are tabulated by month and state in "CCCSTAMTS." Tornado events resulting in fatalities are documented in "CCCSTATIJ."

The following are brief descriptions of the contents of these two messages:

(1) CCCSTAMTS: The numbers of reports received in real time are listed in the column "ROUGH." Those tornadoes whose occurrences are confirmed by "Storm Data..." are listed in the column "SMOOTH." "NORM" refers to averages for the period 1950-1980. "KILLERS" gives the number of tornadoes causing fatalities. This message is updated daily.

(2) CCCSTATIJ: All times are Central Standard Time (CST). Reports are preliminary until confirmed by "Storm Data..." Columns A, B, C and D refer to fatalities that occurred in tornado watches, in severe thunderstorm watches, close to watches, or without a watch, respectively. In the "REMARKS" section, "WW" refers to the number of a severe local storm watch that was valid for the time and location of the tornado occurrence. This message is updated as required.

6. RELATED STUDIES

by Kelly and Schaefer (1982) documented Α study characteristics of severe local storm warnings and verification statistics for the period 1976-79. Currently, the data bases are undergoing standardization to facilitate studies. Monthly and year-to-date future statistical verification summaries are provided regional to all headquarters and local offices. Verification procedures are constantly reviewed for possible improvements. Although they are not discussed here, these topics will be subjects of future reports.

7. SUMMARY

Recent increased emphasis on verification by management has produced increased demands for timely verification reports. Two messages that are routinely transmitted via AFOS can be helpful. These messages summarize, on a daily and weekly basis, the warnings and event reports that have been collected by the NSSFC and included in verification data bases. Review of these messages by local offices and rapid receipt of any needed changes by the NSSFC can help to assure that warning verification for field stations is both timely and accurate. Also, these summaries can aid development of local or regional storm histories.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9. **REFERENCES**

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- , 1979: Counties and County Equivalents of the States of the United States and the District of Columbia. FIPS PUB 6-3. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 39 pp.

National Weather Service, 1982: <u>National Verification Plan</u>. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NOAA, 81 pp.

APPENDIX A

	Tabl	e A.1	TIME CO:	VERSION	4
		CDT	MDT	PDT	
GMT	EDT	EST	CST	MST	PST
+0	+4	+5	+6	+7	+8
0000	2000	1900	1800	1700	1600
0100	2100	2000	1900	1800	1700
0200	2200	2100	2000	1900	1800
0300	2300	2200	2100	2000	1900
0400	0000	2300	2200	2100	2000
0500	0100	0000	2300	2200	2100
0600	0200	0100	0000	2300	2200
0700	0300	0200	0100	0000	2300
0800	0400	0300	0200	0100	0000
0900	0500	0400	0300	0200	0100
1000	0600	0500	0400	0300	0200
1100	0700	0600	0500	0400	0300
1200	0800	0700	0600	0500	0200
1300 -	0900	0800	0700	0600	0500
1400	1000	0900	0800	0700	0600
1500	1100	1000	0900	0800	0700
1600	1200	1100	1000	0900	0800
1700	1300	1200	1100	1000	0900
1800	1400	1300	1200	1100	1000
1900	1500	1400	1300	1200	1100
2000	1600	1500	1400	1300	1200
2100	1700	1600	1500	1400	1300
2200	1800	1700	1600	1500	1400
2300	1900	1800	1700	1600	1500

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Table A.2 WARNING TYPE/BASIS CODES

Tornado/Radar 1 2 Tornado/Public Tornado Report 3 Tornado/Public Funnel Report 4 Tornado/Satellite Analysis 5 Severe Tstm/Radar 6 Severe Tstm/Public Report Severe Tstm/Satellite Analysis 7 Table A.3 COUNTY PORTION WARNED 01 Entire County 02 East Half 03 West Half North Half 04 05 South Half Northwest Half 06 Northeast Half 07 Southwest Half 80 09 Southeast Half Northwest Quarter 10 11 Northeast Quarter 12 Southwest Quarter Southeast Quarter 13 14 Central North Central 15 16 West Central 17 East Central South Central 18