



Lake County  
Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service ®  
Amateur Radio Emergency Service ®  
1303 North Milwaukee Avenue  
Libertyville, IL 60048



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

For additional information contact:

Jerry Martin, KC9BDA

Public Information Officer

[kc9bda@gmail.com](mailto:kc9bda@gmail.com)

847-924-8242

## Ham Radio Operators Support Severe Weather Seminar

Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Batavia, IL - Tom Skilling, a well known Chicago TV personality and a weather forecaster with a huge following hosted his 32<sup>nd</sup> annual Tornado and Severe Weather Seminar at Fermi Lab, a U.S. Department of Energy facility in a western suburb of Chicago.

Amateur radio and the SKYWARN reporting network again participated with an informational booth to educate the general public, and recruit potential SKYWARN members. The SKYWARN information booth was staffed by ham radio operators from Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will County.

These experienced weather spotters discussed the importance of having trained observers reporting actual weather conditions and describing resulting storm damage not available from the National Weather Service Doppler radar. During the intermission of each session ten NOAA weather radios donated by Midland Electronics were raffled off by the amateur radio SKYWARN booth.



Amateur radio operators from N.E. Illinois staff the Amateur Radio SKYWARN information booth outside the Ramsey Auditorium at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory.

We have seen many areas affected by severe weather in the news lately from the earthquake / tsunami in Japan, to the thunderstorms / tornados in the south east U.S. which has stimulated lots of interest in all aspects of severe weather. The attendance at this seminar is again standing room only in the main lecture hall, but also with the closed circuit video presentation in the secondary overflow theatre as well a third location in the cafeteria.

The first featured speaker was Dr. Louis Uccellini, Director of NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Prediction in Camp Spring, Maryland, which oversees operations of the National Hurricane Center, the Storm Prediction Center, the Environmental Modeling Center and the Climate and Ocean Forecast Centers as well as the Space Weather Forecast Center. These national centers



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provide weather forecasters in this country with the data and numerical model forecasts which make possible the work, in and out of the media, conducted by each of them across the United States.

Dr. Uccellini stated “Never before in our history has this country had to deal with 14 billion-dollar



Illinois SKYWARN members Tom Ciciora, KA9QPN and Henry Sahler III N9NOX, collected names to raffle off 20 NOAA weather radios donated through the cooperation of Tom Skilling, and Chicago based Midland Electronics.

weather and climate disasters in a single year. These events swept the country in 2011 and included a series of devastating and deadly tornado outbreaks to record flooding and our own crippling Chicago area snowstorm early in the year. Accurate advance forecasts of each alerted the public of the impending threats and saved lives.”

The new forecasting models give us the potential of forecasting severe weather up to a week in advance. These are the result of super computers making 70 million

calculations per second, and now are actually an “ensemble” of 8 forecast models from all over the world. These forecasts come from France, England, U.S. Japan, China, our military and government agencies as well as from many others. By watching the trends of several which agree, then a forecast can be generated with a higher degree of confidence.

A forecast can only reach out to a maximum of 14 days. Most are 8 or 9 days with some degree of certainty. The most important factors to users of our forecasts are; **reliability, timing and accuracy**. That is what we strive for Uccellini mentioned.

Other featured speakers and their topics included;

- Dr. Jim Angel, State Climatologist, Illinois State Water Survey | Prairie Research Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “*Where and When Do Illinois Tornadoes Strike--An Updated Look at The History Of Illinois Tornadoes*”. Despite the early stage of the new 2012 tornado season, Illinois has already experienced its worst tornado disaster since 2004 in Utica. Seven perished in the most recent storm during the pre-dawn hours of February 29 in downstate Harrisburg, Il as a deadly EF-4 twister (bearing winds of 166 to 200 mph) leveled a huge swath of that community before the sun rose. Yet another twister turned deadly Friday resulting in another death near Opdyke, IL--also in downstate Illinois. Most experts fear we've not seen the last tornado this season---more are likely to follow.



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- Jim Reed, Award-winning extreme weather photographer, Jim Reed Photography, Wichita, Kansas. *“Are you Ready? Situational Awareness for a Changing Climate”*. Jim shared life-saving tips he has experienced firsthand during his 20 years of storm chasing. Jim had shown videos and photos taken during dozens of record-setting storms, including Hurricane Katrina and the recent tornado outbreaks, and he offered tactics and new technology for receiving reliable forecasts and warnings that can keep you and your family safe.
- Jim Allsopp, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service, Chicago: *“Severe Weather Preparedness for Large Outdoor Events”*. Last year 7 people died and 43 were injured when a severe thunderstorm wind gust took down a large concert stage at the Indiana State Fair. Every summer thousands of people are exposed to the elements at concerts, sporting events, fairs and festivals. Jim discussed how large event organizers, emergency managers, and meteorologists work together to keep people safer at large outdoor events?
- Edward Fenelon, Meteorologist in Charge, Chicago-National Weather Service Office. *“Enhancing the Weather Warning Process to Facilitate Improved Public Response”*. 2011 was a tragic year in terms of tornado fatalities in the U.S. Despite advanced warnings, 550 people lost their lives due to twisters, 158 of those were in the Joplin, MO tornado. Assessment findings following the Joplin tornado indicated most people sought confirmation from additional sources before seeking shelter, and credible, extraordinary risk signals prompt people to take proactive actions. To address these findings, the NWS is conducting an "impacts-based" warning demonstration project in 2012 designed to provide more information to the media and emergency managers and to facilitate improved public response and decision making. We looked at what this project is all about, and how it can improve communication of risk and more clearly identify potential impacts.
- Brian Smith, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, National Weather Service, Omaha, Nebraska: *“Are You Safe?- Safety in Public Buildings”*. After last year's Joplin storm, there were many examples of common buildings (Walmart, Home Depot, Walgreens, schools, and a hospital) that were struck by that massive storm. Brian discussed safety in the city area and what people can do to protect themselves. He also touched on the 1967 outbreak (so will Russ Schneider) and what happened in the Fox Valley area.
- Dr. Russ Schneider Director, NOAA-NWS Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma *“Tornadoes and Severe Thunderstorms ... From an Eventful Chicago Area Childhood Through A Historic 2011 Tornado Season”*. Russ is a Chicago area native. During his talk he revisited the historic Chicago tornado events, several of which spurred his childhood interest in weather; describe national severe weather forecast efforts at the NOAA Storm Prediction Center, and recapped the historic 2011 United States tornado season.

Information on the Tom Skilling Tornado and Severe Weather Seminar is found at:  
<http://www.asktom.org/>

To learn more about Lake County SKYWARN, go to: <http://www.lakecountyskywarn.org/>

To learn more about Amateur Radio in general and how to become a ham radio operator, go to  
[www.emergency-radio.org](http://www.emergency-radio.org) .

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