

Meet Bob Rose, Meteorologist with the Lower Colorado River Authority, Austin, Texas

I'm the type of person that became interested in the weather at a very early age. I often say that I liked the weather before liking weather was ever cool. Long before the movie "Twister" and the explosion of storm chasing, I enjoyed observing and studying the weather. I enjoyed watching television weathercasters present the weather and talk about storms. There was a part of me that wanted to do that same job one day.



I'm very fortunate that I was able to take my fascination with the weather and make it into both a hobby and a career.

How did you first get interested in weather?

Growing up in the city of Houston, I quickly became fascinated with thunderstorms, frequent floods and of course tropical storms and hurricanes. I pursued my love for weather in high school by taking extra science and math classes. Following high school, I decided to pursue my interest in weather by attending Texas A&M University where I obtained a Bachelors of Science degree in meteorology. I did one year of graduate work but decided that wasn't for me. I wanted to get out and work in the field of meteorology.

How did you find your first job, and what was it like?



Figure 1. Bob Rose, meteorologist with KVUE TV in Austin, Texas.

In my junior year of college, I applied for a weekend weathercaster position in College Station. Somehow, with no experience, I got the position, which launched my career as a television meteorologist in College Station and Austin, Texas that lasted 17 years. Figure 1 is a picture taken from the weather center of KVUE-TV in Austin, Texas where I worked for 7 years. However, after working years of weekends and early mornings, I was burning out and wearing down

so I decided to pursue positions outside of television. Fortunately, I found a job as a meteorologist with the largest river authority in Texas.

How would you describe your current job and how is it different than your job on television?

Since 1995, I have been chief meteorologist with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), based in Austin, Texas. LCRA is much like the Tennessee Valley Authority, except it was created by the state and not the federal government. It operates without any tax money, instead, generating revenue through the sale of electricity and water. LCRA's primary mission is to provide flood control and create a water supply to citizens who live near the Texas Colorado River and its tributaries. LCRA operates a series of 6 dams and lakes that are among the most popular in the state. In addition to flood control, LCRA is also a large electrical utility, operating 4 large gas and coal power plants along with hydroelectric and wind power plants. A large amount of LCRA's water is sold to farmers in the lower end of the river, farmers who make up the largest segment of rice agriculture in all of Texas. But it doesn't stop there; LCRA also operates a large network of electrical transmission lines across the state. Plus, it owns and operates a number of parks and nature centers up and down the river.

As you can see, weather drives all of LCRA's operations. Wet years make managing the water difficult, while dry and hot years strain both the electrical and water resources. As a meteorologist for LCRA, my job first and foremost is to provide short-term and long-term weather forecasts to the water, energy generation and transmission divisions on the company. These forecasts are vital for a smooth, low cost efficient operation. Forecasting weather across Central Texas involves all the extremes in weather: floods, droughts, heat waves, tropical storms, occasional winter weather and lots of severe weather. Daily forecasts are prepared and e-mailed to key individuals and groups throughout the organization. These same weather forecasts are also shared with area emergency managers, county judges and media. Weather information and data is also shared with the general public through LCRA's website. When large floods strike, my job is front and center, providing critical forecasts of rain to LCRA's staff of hydrologists and upper management. It doesn't help that the watershed of the Colorado River experiences some of the highest rainfall rates and greatest flash floods of anywhere in the entire US.

Is forecasting the weather a big part of your job?

Yes, but watching and forecasting the weather is just part of the fun. My job also involves interfacing with local and state-wide media that often turn to the LCRA as a source of weather information and explanation. I also write numerous weather articles for LCRA internal and external publications. In addition, there

are numerous Rotary clubs, Lions' clubs and various civic organizations that are often interested in having me a speaker.

I can honestly say my job is never boring. Even in times of drought, forecasting the weather across this part of Texas can sometimes be a challenge. I consider myself fortunate in that I have been able to follow my passion for weather from childhood all the way to a successful career as a private sector meteorologist in adulthood. It's fascinating to work in and be a part of the Central Texas weather community.

What would you say to those interested in working in the private sector?

The private sector encompasses a variety of fun and exciting jobs in the field of meteorology. From the utility industry and aviation to television, radio and agriculture, there are many opportunities. While few if any of these jobs involve chasing storms or intercepting hurricanes, the field is pretty open. One thing to remember about the weather is that it's rarely ever a boring desk job. I've been lucky enough to have worked in the field of meteorology both in front of and behind the camera, and I can honestly tell you that both sides have been exciting and fulfilling. I'd encourage anyone with a passion for weather to get a good education, then pursue their dreams in the field of private sector meteorology.