



Heavy rainfall from an approaching shelf cloud over lower Green Bay on June 13, 2004

Storm Spotting Q & A

We sent a few questions to Dave Levorson, a veteran spotter and amateur radio operator in Wausau. Dave gives us a “day in the life” of spotting storms for NWS.

- Q:** Are you assigned a particular area to cover, or just go wherever the best observation point seems to be?
- A:** I don't have an area assignment. I usually spend time analyzing the storm's approach as it moves in from other counties before I go mobile. After I've studied the storm track & damage history (if any), then I take a look at current surface observations, and then I have somewhat of an educated guess as to where I might start spotting.
- Q:** What is your main source of activation (weather) information?
- A:** Myself. (see next question)
- Q:** Describe the steps, in order, to take after activation.
- A:** 1. If the NWS Storm Prediction Center (SPC) or NWS Weather Forecast Office in Green Bay says 1-2 days out that severe storms are a possibility, I'm on alert.
2. The night before and on the “target” day, I spend time studying the weather, as well as seeing what NWS Green Bay and SPC have to say.
3. I will contact some of the more dedicated spotters I know, and discuss their observations and prepare a game plan.
4. Fuel up the vehicle, have a go-bag ready, and when the time comes, deploy to the field.
- Q:** When was the most impressive storm you have spotted?
- A:** Most definitely, the Oakfield Tornado! July 18, 1996. Front row seat from start to finish.

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(Storm Spotter Q & A continued)

Q: Have you ever felt physically threatened by a storm you were spotting?

A: Even after 21 years spotting, when it's pitch black except for brilliant lightning, hailing, and wind rocking my truck, I still feel threatened. The power of a severe storm IS threatening and unpredictable. You have to respect the awesome power around you.

Q: What made you want to be a Storm Spotter?

A: Severe storms intrigued me when I was a kid. I still remember the Ohio Valley tornado outbreak of April 3-4, 1974. The TV was full of news from that tornado outbreak!

Q: What is the hardest part of being a Storm Spotter?

A: Taking your weather education up to the next level. Some of the topics are tough!

Q: What's your best advice for a new Storm Spotter?

A: Calm down, and don't run right out without obtaining some education. Lights and radios don't make a good spotter. Education and safety awareness does.
