



New Mexico Amateur Radio Emergency Service



Press Release

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AMATEUR RADIO SAVE LIVES IN NEW MEXICO TORNADOS

Clovis, NM – The weather turned very nasty on Friday, March 23, 2007, in eastern New Mexico. Thirteen tornados were reported that afternoon from Tatum to Logan. Thanks to Keith Hayes, KC5KH, Skywarn Coordinator and National Weather Service (NWS) Meteorologist, lives were saved. Twenty-four hours ahead of the storms, Hayes sent messages to the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES)® District Emergency Coordinators and the County Emergency Managers warning of the potential for severe weather.

With the warning, ARES members and Skywarn weather spotters were in the field ready for action. As the clouds gathered, spotters in southeastern New Mexico using ham radio were talking directly to Hayes at the Albuquerque National Weather Service office, WX5ABQ, via the New Mexico Mega-Link repeater system. Hams in Clovis were in contact with Jory McIntosh, KJ5RM, in the Fort Worth National Weather Service office on the Echolink node provided by Joseph Flores, KK5OV. The Weather Service was able to feed minute by minute updates to the spotters. McIntosh was able to pinpoint the exact course and path of destructive Clovis tornado. Early warning and trained spotters in the field feeding timely, accurate information to the Weather Service and local authorities allowed extra warning time to residents and helped to save lives.

The weather started looking bad about 1 p.m. on Friday, when Alf Lindsey, W5ALL, the Chaves County DEC, opened a Skywarn on the Caprock repeater located on KOBR television antenna. Robert Tice, W5TIC, spotted a tornado from the same storm west of Tatum about 5 p.m. Jim Morrison, KM5BS, tracked storms just south of Roosevelt County where he observed a large tornado on the ground about 5:45 p.m., prompting the first of many tornado warnings for the counties along the Texas-New Mexico line. The first warning for Clovis was issued about 7:30 p.m. The tornado struck the city about 7:45 p.m. Sandra Creiglow, KC5EGP, handled net control duties in Clovis as the storms approached. Eastern New Mexico Amateur Radio Club had three teams operating in and around Clovis before and after the twister.

From 1:00 P.M. on, there were over thirty hams in southeastern New Mexico and West Texas monitoring the repeater and relaying observations through Lindsey to the Albuquerque weather office.

The New Mexico State Emergency Operations Center was activated as well as the Bernalillo County EOC. During the tornados, the State EOC lost contact with Clovis, Logan, Texico, Carlsbad, and Portales. Mike Scales, K5SCA, Sandoval County DEC, relayed information to the State EOC from the storm areas using the state-wide Mega-Link repeater system to talk with hams in the tornado damaged areas. Scales also kept the State EOC informed on localized flooding from Carlsbad as storms trained across that city.

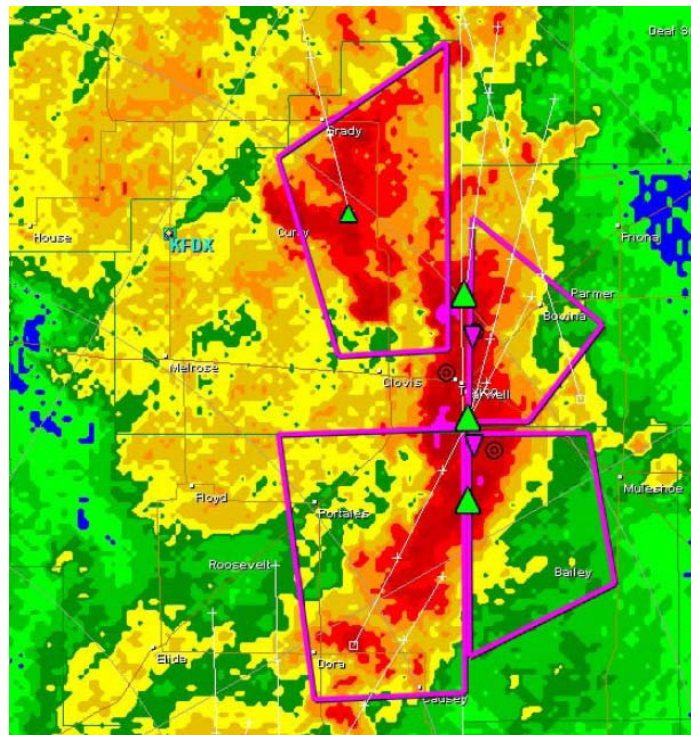
John English, WB6QKF, operated from the American Red Cross office in Albuquerque was on the air assisting the shelters being set up in Logan and Clovis.

In the aftermath of the storm, Clovis had a 4.5 mile swath carved from the city. Thirty-five victims of the storm were hospitalized; fortunately only two had critical injuries. Blaine Smith, KB5UOT, in Clovis commented that, "We have always trained for a single tornado, but not eight of them at the same time." In Logan, two dozen mobile homes were destroyed. Tatum had reports of four tornados in the span of a half an hour. The American Red Cross requested Ham Radio assistance, via the State EOC, to man shelters in Logan and Clovis.

More severe weather popped across eastern New Mexico and western Texas over the weekend. Spotters were active early on Sunday afternoon around Lubbock, TX as possible tornadoes were reported.



Tornado west of Tatum, New Mexico courtesy KM5BS



Clovis tornado track from NWS radar 0219z 24 March courtesy W5ALL

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Active Clovis Hams: W5ROY, W5OM, AD5SY, KE5FEG, KB5ZLB, KB5OUT,
KD5RPG, N5ZP, KD5RPD, KD5RPE, KD5RPH, KK5OV, KJ5RM.

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For More information see:

Albuquerque NWS Skywarn/WX5ABQ –
www.srh.noaa.gov/abq/skywarn/skywarn.htm
American Radio Relay League – www.arrl.org
ARES – www.arrl.org/ares
Skywarn – www.skywarn.net
Echolink – www.voipwx.net
Mega-Link – www.megalink.jpara.net
Chaves County ARES - <http://www.dfn.com/pvarc/ares/>
Bernalillo County ARES – www.bc-ares.org
Sandoval County ARES – www.nmscares.org

Thanks to W5ROY, WA5WHN, KB5UOT, W5ALL, K5SCA and many others for providing information for this release.

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www.emergency-radio.org