

# **CHAVES COUNTY SKYWARN**

Chaves County, New Mexico

## **GUIDELINES FOR SEVERE WEATHER NET OPERATION**

The following serves as a guideline for Skywarn Amateur Radio operations within Chaves County, New Mexico. These guidelines pertain primarily to amateur radio severe weather net operations in Chaves County. These guidelines are not all inclusive and are designed to be flexible to fit various unforeseen circumstances. They are, however, meant to establish a sense of order and protocol to assure a smooth, efficient operation in the event of a severe weather emergency. Concise, accurate and timely reports are vital to the National Weather Service, and a well run weather net will help facilitate those goals.

## **WEATHER NET MODES**

Chaves County Skywarn will utilize a dual-mode system for weather net operation. The 'informal' mode is to be used in most cases where dangerously imminent weather is not present, but conditions exist that have potential to spawn severe weather. An example might be a spring afternoon when numerous storm cells are popping up around the area over open range and/or a severe thunderstorm WATCH has been issued by the National Weather Service. A 'formal' weather net would be reserved for situations where a community is threatened by imminent severe weather, weather conditions meeting severe criteria are observed or the National Weather Service has issued a severe storm WARNING for a particular community. The level or mode of which a net is to be called will be left to the discretion of the Net Controller. However, the Skywarn Coordinator, ARES DEC or Assistant DEC, County Emergency Manager or representative of the National Weather Service reserve the right the order the net into either mode they deem necessary.

## **THE 'INFORMAL' WEATHER NET**

The informal weather net will be the one called in most cases. During the informal mode, weather reports of all types may be submitted and casual conversation will be allowed. Hams must remember to allow sufficient time between transmissions in the event a spotter needs to break in to report severe conditions or the Net Controller needs to upgrade. To initiate an informal weather net, begin by reading the appropriate preamble after ascertaining that the frequency is not in use. After taking check-ins, record the location of each spotter and know if he will be remaining stationary or if he or she will be mobile and what their proposed route of travel will be. Continue to monitor weather conditions and be prepared to upgrade to formal mode if necessary. Repeat the informal weather net preamble every 30 minutes and call for additional check-ins.

## THE 'FORMAL' SKYWARN NET

The formal Skywarn net should be called under the following conditions:

- Conditions meeting severe criteria have been reported.
- The NWS has issued a severe weather warning based on radar echoes or other detection data.
- By direct order of the County Emergency Manager, Skywarn Coordinator, ARES DEC or a National Weather Service representative.

While a formal Skywarn net is in effect, only the following radio traffic will be permitted:

- Traffic pertaining to any pending emergency.
- Weather reports and observations from spotters meeting severe criteria, (see SEVERE WEATHER CRITERIA)
- Broadcasts from the Net Controller relaying weather warnings issued by the NWS.
- Traffic relating specifically to the pending severe weather.

Avoid idle chit chat and make reports as brief and concise as possible. Always be sure to relay pertinent information including your call sign, your exact location, the nature of the event and the direction and distance the event is from your location as well as the direction of travel of the event. Do not report conditions that do not meet severe criteria.

Net controllers and spotters have several means by which to relay severe weather reports to the NWS:

- ◆ NWSSchat
- ◆ Toll free spotter phone number: 1.888.386.7637
- ◆ The MegaLink (Roswell repeater 147.26, standard positive offset, 100.0 Hertz tone)
- ◆ The STORM REPORT link under CURRENT HAZARDS at [weather.gov/abq](http://weather.gov/abq). (Use this method as a last resort since filing a report is relatively time consuming).

Typically, the net controller will compile reports from field spotters and send a compiled report to the NWS. However, a net controller may ask a spotter to send in his own report to the NWS under certain conditions.

**REMEMBER!** In any circumstance where injury accidents have occurred or an imminent, immediate threat to life or limb exists, call 911 to make sure EMS has been activated. This must be done in the most timely manner by either the net controller or the field spotter.

Once the imminent threat of severe weather has passed, or the severe conditions have diminished, or the formal net has been ordered terminated, return to an informal net or cancel the net by use of the appropriate scripts.

### **ADDITIONAL MEANS OF NET ACTIVATION NOTIFICATION**

Most cellular phones now have the capability to send text messages to a group of cell phones or e-mail addresses. The Skywarn Coordinator will use this method to alert spotters, DEC's and EM's etc. that a severe weather net or Skywarn net has been activated. Net Controllers may use this system in their own cell phones or use a call-out/notification list.

### **ORDER OF REPEATER USAGE**

When a severe weather or Skywarn net is called, we will attempt to use the following repeaters in the order listed below. In the event the first repeater is not useable, switch to the next one on the list until a good solid communication can be established. Remember, amateur radio is just one form of communication. If necessary, call Net Control by cell phone or land line if no radio contact can be made.

- 147.32 - 162.2 Hz
- 146.98 - 100.0 Hz
- 146.61 - 100.0 Hz
- 145.25 - 141.3 Hz
- 147.26 + 100.0 Hz (MegaLink)

Often, severe weather events occur that affect not only Chaves County, but southern neighboring counties as well such as Lea and Eddy Counties. Interoperability with Eddy County can be achieved by using the MegaLink or the 444.975 repeater east of Artesia. It requires a 156.7 PL tone with a standard positive offset and is linked to the West Texas Connection during Skywarn operations.

## **SCRIPTS AND REFERENCES**

### **INFORMAL WEATHER NET PREAMBLE**

“This is (call sign) of the Chaves County Skywarn group calling an informal weather net on the”, (repeater frequency and location). “This informal weather net is being called in response to atmospheric conditions that may be right for severe weather to develop in or near Chaves County.” “My name is (name) and I will be your Net Controller. At this time I’ll take check-ins from trained Skywarn spotters in Chaves County and the surrounding area.” (Pause for check-ins). “Now, I’ll take check-ins from any interested hams in Chaves County and the surrounding areas. Anyone interested in checking in to this informal weather net, come now.”

### **FORMAL SKYWARN WEATHER NET PREAMBLE**

“This is (call sign) calling a formal Skywarn weather net on the (repeater and location). This is a formal, directed net and only reports meeting severe criteria will be accepted at this time. Please refrain from all radio traffic except that of an emergency nature and weather reports meeting the following severe criteria: Hail 1” in diameter or larger. Wind speeds in excess of 58 miles per hour. Wall clouds, especially rotating wall clouds. Funnel clouds, tornados and flash flooding, or major damage or injury directly related to weather. Anyone with severe weather reports or emergency traffic, come now.

### **SCRIPT FOR DOWNGRADING FROM FORMAL TO INFORMAL**

“This is (call sign) concluding this formal Skywarn severe weather net. I’d like to thank you for your reports which are vital to the National Weather Service for the early detection and warning of severe weather. At this time, we now downgrade to an informal weather net, permitting all reports regardless of their level of severity. I’d like to thank the operators of this repeater for it’s use and anyone needing to use this repeater may do so now.

### **SEVERE WEATHER CRITERIA**

- Hail 1” in diameter or larger (quarter size). Avoid comparing hail size to marbles.
- Wind speeds in excess of 58 mph.
- Wall clouds, particularly rotating ones.
- Funnel clouds or tornadoes
- Flash flooding
- Property damage or injury caused by severe weather.