

21 DEC 04 – KJ2N (Net Control) Training Material

Good Versus Bad Reports

"This is KJ2N, Essex County NJ Deputy Coordinator, calling from Bloomfield. At 4:35 p.m., I observed hail 1 inch in diameter at my house and recorded a wind gust to 65 mph. Several small trees were blown down on my street as well. No flooding has been observed as yet. Since 3:00 p.m., I have recorded 1.3 inches of rainfall, and we currently have light rain falling."

This is an example of what a "very good" spotter report might sound like, and very typical of the type of reports we get from many of our spotters. It identifies the person as a coordinator, and specifically identifies the town and county from which he is calling. It also gives several specific reports AND the times of the observations.

Unfortunately, there are times when we get reports that are lacking in detail, or simply missing vital information. Such an example might look or sound like this...

"I'm a spotter in Essex County. It's raining cats and dogs at my house right now and I heard static on the radio a while ago. I also heard that there might be a tree across some road on the scanner."

What's wrong with this report? Well, first of all, where is this spotter located? "Raining cats and dogs" really doesn't help that much...we need to know how much rain has fallen, and since what time. Lightning does cause static to be heard on AM radio stations, but you cannot readily tell where the storm is, where it is moving to, or how severe the weather being produced is. There are no specifics...no really helpful information.

The keys to a useful (good) spotter report...whether it is reported via amateur radio, telephone, fax or email are:

- Identify yourself as a spotter (you can give your call sign or spotter ID number).
- Tell us the location of your observation, the time that the event actually occurred, and exactly what occurred. Be specific, but remember that the NWS personnel may be extremely busy and won't have time for a long, drawn-out explanation.
- Give specifics and first hand information. Generalities and second (or third) hand info needs to be verified with another report or phone call and can become very time consuming.
- If the NWS forecaster or amateur radio Net Control feels that additional information is needed, we'll ask for it, or call you back.

These points are always discussed during spotter training classes, and are discussed in the local spotter guide. Please remember that the spotter line (the 800 number) is for spotter reporting ONLY. Forecasts should not be requested on this line, ESPECIALLY during severe weather! And finally, please don't take it personally if your report does not make it into a Public Information Statement or Local Storm Report. Most of the time, only a representative sampling of reports is sent out. Rest assured that your reports are needed and used, regardless of whether they get published or not.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Emergency Power Nights

Next week's net is designated as emergency power night. During the last Essex County Skywarn net for each month, we ask that all stations check-in using a power source other than commercial electric power. This is to test stations ability to pass information when severe weather disrupts normal power. Please prepare your stations in advance. We will take the time to check out various setups for each station and share the setups with other participants.