

STORMBUSTER

A Newsletter for Emergency Managers & Storm Spotters

Summer Edition, 2002



WEB Page Update

By Ken LaPenta

Our new web page (<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/aly/>) has been operational for several months. We recently added a new graphical interface in the center of the main page to guide you to NWS Products. When our Home Page loads, you will see a map of eastern New York and western New England. Click on any point on the map and you will get the forecast (text and graphical) for that point, current weather observations for nearby locations, and imagery from the nearest radar site. The map includes color coding to highlight areas under watches, warnings, advisories or special weather statements. Check out the lower right corner of the map. If you hit the *zoom out* button, you'll go to a national map which will allow you access to information from any area in the country. Around the *zoom out* button there are directions (N, NE, E, S and W) that allow you quick access to the Web pages of National Weather Service Offices near us.

The migration to our new WEB page has not been problem free. Our old WEB page ran on a computer here in our office. Our new page resides on a national server in Washington with the WEB pages of other National Weather Service offices. During periods of unusual or adverse weather, the load on the national server has been large. As a result, our pages can be slow to load. We are working with our regional and national headquarters to increase server capacity and improve our service. Also, some people seem to have missed the transition to our new page. The old page was run simultaneously with the new for about 2 months, but was no longer operational as of early May. We had a forward link at our old main page location during the overlap, but if you had direct links to our secondary pages in your *Favorites* or *Bookmarks*, it is likely you missed the changeover. We apologize for any inconvenience.

We would like to remind you that you can send reports of severe weather directly to the National Weather Service in Albany via the internet at:

http://cstar.cestm.albany.edu:7775/Severe_WX/svrwx.htm. Be sure to enter your spotter ID, so we know the report is from a trained spotter. Then fill out the rest of the form and click on submit. A few spotters have already taken advantage of this new technology.

The Spring That Almost Wasn't

by Hugh Johnson and Evan Heller

March both came in and went out like a lamb. However, in between, it was as fickle as usual. The temperature on March 3rd soared to 64 degrees, breaking the record for the date by five degrees. Late in the day, a strong cold front blew in, producing some wind damage in Saratoga and Warren Counties. A roof was blown off in the town of Greenfield, while a tree flew through a house in Halfmoon. Trees and power lines were blown down in Cambridge, Washington County. Much colder air roared in the very next day. Just like the past winter, this cold snap was short-lived, as temperatures raced back into the 60s by the 8th. The warmest reading for the month was 66 degrees on the 9th. Also, that day's low of 46 degrees was the mildest ever recorded in Albany on the 9th. Another big wind-producing cold front blew through the region on the 10th, delivering even more widespread wind damage. A 64 mph gust was clocked at Summit, Schoharie County, while a large tree fell onto a house, damaging the roof, in Philmont, Columbia County. Another tree crashed onto a cabin near Caroga Lake, while law enforcement personnel reported a large number of downed trees and power lines throughout Saratoga County. A fire that destroyed a dock at Lake George was likely started by downed wires. See-sawing temperatures continued throughout the month. On the first day of astronomical spring, a late season snowstorm hit the hilltowns. Valley areas got by with only a couple of inches of slushy snow, while up to a foot fell across portions of the Catskills. As much as 10 inches fell across the Berkshires and Greens. Two days later, the high temperature at Albany was just 27 degrees. The

average temperature for the day of just 20 degrees made this the second-coldest day in Albany since last winter! The 12 degree low temperature reading was the lowest for the month. Mild weather closed out the month, with the last 3 days reaching the lower 60s. There were 8 days during the month where the mercury topped out in the 60s. For the 8th consecutive month, the monthly mean temperature finished above normal, but less so than during the previous months. Fourteen days of precipitation were noted during March. A record for the day of 1.49 inches of rain fell on the 26th, also the month's greatest daily amount. Across the higher terrain of Fulton, Montgomery, Schenectady and Schoharie Counties, the precipitation fell as snow, sleet and freezing rain. Icy build-up and strong winds brought numerous trees down. The monthly precipitation total of 3.56 inches was slightly above the normal of 3.27. This helped put a dent in the long-term drought, albeit a small one.

April saw a continuation of wildly vacillating temperatures. A four-day cold snap resulted in temperatures tumbling to 21 degrees on the 5th. The high of just 39 degrees was the lowest maximum temperature for the month, and the average temperature of 30 degrees made it the coldest day of the month. A low of 20 degrees on the 7th was the lowest temperature recorded for the month. Also, an unusual snow squall brought a quick 2.4 inches of snow to Albany during the nighttime hours of the 5th-6th. It was the month's only measurable snow event. Warmer and somewhat wetter conditions took place toward mid-month. One to two inches of rain fell across the Adirondacks on the 13th and 14th, an event which largely missed the Albany area. Excessive snow melt was an added problem, and the result was some streams and rivers briefly spilling out of their banks. The flooding, however, was little more than a nuisance, as conditions quickly returned to normal. The weather turned exceptionally warm at mid-month. On tax day, the 15th, the low temperature was 57 degrees, the mildest ever on that date. The next day, the high at Albany was 89 degrees, breaking a 106-year-old record by one degree. On the 17th, more history was made as the mercury soared to 91. Not only did this establish yet another daily high temperature record, but it was the earliest ever occurrence of a 90 degree or higher temperature being recorded in Albany, by just one day. With an average temperature of 74.5 degrees, it was also the warmest day of the entire season. Two more 80 plus degree days followed, on the 18th and 19th, but both events fell a little short of record. Two additional record

high minimum temperatures were established: 58 degrees on the 17th, and a tie of 60 on the 18th. A cold front on Friday, the 19th, brought the first severe weather event of the season to our area. Thunderstorms toppled trees and wires across the Mid Hudson Valley. Cool and somewhat rainy weather closed out the month. In fact, every day from the 21st on was below normal, including the days with hard freezes from the 24th to the 27th. Despite the chilly finish, temperatures managed to finish above normal for the 9th straight month. The precipitation total of 2.51 inches was about three quarters of an inch below normal.

The first four days of May continued where late April left off, cooler than normal. A marginal wind storm brought down a lot of small to medium size tree limbs on the 2nd. After a brief warm spell from the 4th to the 7th, including our highest and only 80 degree, reading for the month, on the 6th, the weather turned cool again. Substantial rains continued to reverse the dry conditions. 2.28 inches of rain fell from the 12th to the 14th. A high of 49 degrees on the 13th tied a record for that date for low maximum temperature. Nearly another inch of precipitation fell on the 18th. This latter event was not all rain, however. The atmosphere turned cold enough for snow to fall, and even accumulate! The 2.2 inches of snow officially recorded on the 18th was not only the first instance of snow ever recorded on this date, but it was also the latest date, by one week, that measurable snow has ever been recorded in Albany! As usual, the higher elevations got even more snow, with Prattsville receiving up to 8 inches! The snow was wet, bringing large tree limbs and power lines down, and resulting in some blackouts. Two days later, we had our coldest May morning, with a low of 29 degrees. This value established a new record low for the date. Another record low, of 33 degrees, was established on the 22nd. May 2002 was the first month that was cooler than normal in Albany since July 2001!



WCM Words

by Dick Westergard

Due to the high cost of printing and mailing hard copies, this will be the last issue of StormBuster mailed to all spotters. Inside the back page is a form for you to return to us if you do not have web access. Please fill that form out *only* if you really can not access the electronic version of StormBuster. For those who request it, we will continue a very limited quarterly StormBuster mailing. Everyone else will get an e-mail from me when it is posted at: <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/aly/special.htm#stormbuster> If I don't already have your e-mail address, please send it to me at the address at the end of this WCM Words section.

As usual, the mailing label on your copy of StormBuster contains the date of your last training. If that date is more than 2 years ago, you should plan to

attend another training session soon. Once that date is more than 5 years in the past, your name will be purged from our database.

StormBuster is a newsletter primarily for our trained SkyWarn spotters. Reader articles, or suggested topics, are always welcome. Do you have any ideas? Drop me an e-mail or a snail mail note.

As the convective season, (May through October) peaks, a reminder of warm season reporting criteria -

1) Tornadoes, water spouts, funnel clouds, wall clouds. 2) Damaging Winds (58 mph or more). 3) Any hail. 4) Damaging lightning. 5) Flooding, including bankfull or near bankfull streams. 6) Measured rainfall - 1.5 inches or more in 4 hours. Get your reports to the National Weather Service by the quickest means possible.

E-Mail: RICHARD.WESTERGARD@noaa.gov

Snail Mail Request Form

To help us save your tax dollars, please complete this form ***ONLY*** if you have no way of getting StormBuster on line.

Tear along dotted line and mail to Dick Westergard at the return address on the back of this page.

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Please continue to send me the quarterly Stormbuster via the U.S. Postal Service:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

Town/State/Zip Code: _____

Spotter ID Number: _____

May 31 Storm Summary

by Dick Westergard

Not mentioned in the Spring Summary from Hugh and Evan was the May 31 severe weather outbreak. During that event, the Albany office issued 42 warnings, two of them tornado warnings. Thirtythree of the warnings verified, including the tornado warnings. Average warning lead time for the day was 24.6 minutes.

We sent damage survey teams to Fulton County, Dutchess County and Litchfield County after this event. There were tornadoes in two places. The first tornado was in Johnstown, in Fulton County, where an F0 tornado spun up on the north edge of a downburst, and tore the roof and part of the back wall off the Holiday Theater.

The second tornado was at Whaley Lake in eastern Dutchess County, where an F1 tornado flattened a hillside of trees, damaged a couple of houses, and dumped a variety of grills and lawn furniture into the lake, then skipped on east for about a mile. The storm path beyond the lake was intermittent, but still included several dozen large

trees down, and a couple of out buildings damaged by falling trees.

Severe thunderstorm reports on May 31 included large hail (up to two inches in diameter) in Ulster, Dutchess, Litchfield, and Fulton Counties. Wind damage was reported in Herkimer, Fulton, Washington, Saratoga, Warren, Montgomery, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Berkshire, Schoharie, Litchfield, and Ulster Counties.

One of our damage survey teams went to Litchfield County, and found no damage at all in the area, in spite of one young weather enthusiast's insistence that he saw a tornado. From his description, I suspect he was observing one of the several "look alike" that we show in our spotter training slide series. Attendance at one of those sessions might make a spotter of the young man.

Our excellent warning statistics during this event are in part a tribute to the many spotters among you who called with reports of all kinds to keep us current on the ground truth as these storms moved through the region. Thank you!

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