



# Sterling Reporter



Newsletter of NOAA's National Weather Service Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office

Volume 7, Issue 3

Winter 2008-2009

## Eastern Region Employee of the Month *Nikole Winstead Listemaa, Senior Forecaster*



Steve Listemaa, our Information Technology Officer (ITO), was selected as Eastern Region's Employee of the Month for August of 2008. According to Eastern Region Director Dean Gulezian, Steve was recognized "...for his knowledge, skills, and seemingly-endless

initiative...", which have been "...major factors in information technology improvements at the national, regional, and local levels".

Steve has been involved in implementing multiple variations of the Weather Research Forecast (WRF) model, benefitting the forecast staff. He has also developed software to easily view ensemble forecast graphics, track marine and public forecast verification, and display current watch and warning status for use in situational awareness. In addition to his regular duties at the office, he has also assisted Eastern Region Headquarters with web site maintenance. Steve also serves as the National Weather Association's webmaster.

**Congratulations, Steve!**

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## MIC's Corner

*James E. Lee, Meteorologist-In-Charge*

Since I last wrote in the Fall 2008 Edition of the Sterling Reporter, the Baltimore/Washington Weather Forecast Office (WFO) has been very busy. I can easily say that the last three months have been the most challenging time in my four-plus years since becoming Meteorologist-in-Charge here at the WFO.

First and foremost, our office completed a successful move by commencing operations at our new facility here in Sterling on Thursday, September 25, 2008. It was amazing to see how in less than three days, our office transitioned from the old to the new, all while maintaining weather watch and forecasting services using our own staff located remotely in State College, PA. Then, less than a month later, our office celebrated this achievement by holding an Open House and Building Dedication Ceremony on October 18-19, 2008. I estimate that we had approximately 3,000 people attend the Open House. It was a wonderful time by all accounts, giving the public the opportunity to see first hand our new facility and interact one-on-one with our operations staff. Thanks to everyone who came out to visit, and also thanks to our partners who helped make the Open House a huge success.

Weatherwise, we have started out the cold weather season at the end of October with several upslope snow events along the west slopes of the Allegheny Front. We have had an active cold season to date, with the favored track of low pressure systems avoiding the coast. This track tends to pull warmer air (above freezing) from western Atlantic, resulting in rain, freezing rain, and sleet conditions as opposed to snow. As of January 7, 2009, Dulles Airport has recorded only a trace amount of snow, which is 4.3 inches less than our seasonal normal-to-date. For the snow lovers out there, let's hope for some cold air to settle in along with a good low to form off of Cape Hatteras sometime soon!

*MIC's Corner Continued on Page 2*

## Tropical Storm Hanna *Luis Rosa, General Forecaster*

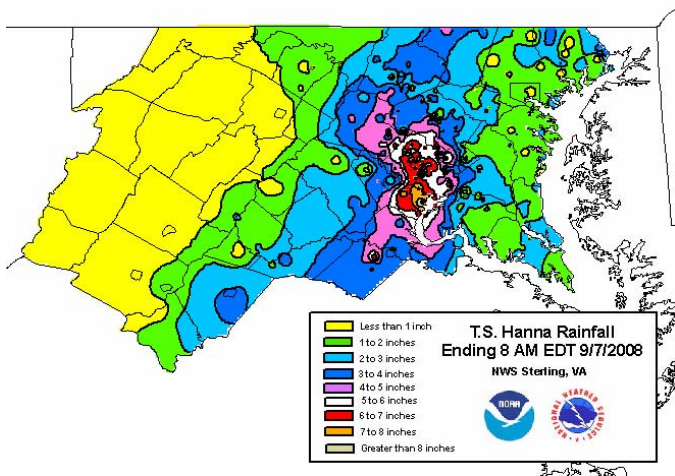
Tropical Storm Hanna formed north of the Turks and Caicos Islands in early September. After completing a counter-clockwise loop between the Turks and Caicos and the northern coast of



Photo: Jeff Schmaltz NASA

Hispaniola, she began moving northwestward toward the Mid Atlantic coast. She made landfall with 70 mph winds during the early morning hours of September 6<sup>th</sup> near the border of North and South Carolina. Hanna then turned northward and accelerated as she moved across eastern Virginia and southern Maryland, passing over Point Lookout in the southern tip of Maryland. Hanna made another landfall over Long Island and lost her tropical characteristics as she exited the northeast coast of the United States early on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

The biggest effects from Hanna in this region were the torrential rains that fell in about an eight hour period which resulted in widespread flash flooding from east of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Potomac River. Widespread rainfall amounts of 4 to 8 inches were observed along the Interstate 95 corridor from Fredericksburg north to Fairfax. The highest observed total was reported in Woodbridge with 9.55 inches. These rains resulted in widespread flash flooding of small streams and creeks and numerous road closures. Trees were also knocked down due to the saturated soils and the gusty winds. Fortunately, no direct deaths or injuries were reported. Outside of the United States, Hanna was responsible for very heavy rainfall in Haiti that resulted in 175 deaths.



## Staffing Additions

*Nikole Winstead Listemaa, Senior Forecaster*

Please join us in welcoming two new General Forecasters to the NWS Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office.

Bryan Jackson has joined our office from NWS Wakefield, Virginia. He was the Meteorologist Intern at the Wakefield Office for a little over a year. Bryan was previously a Student Intern at the Meteorological Development Lab in Silver Spring, Maryland from September 2006 to August 2007.



Jared Klein has been our Meteorologist Intern since May of 2007 and is currently our Climate Program Leader and our Assistant Student Volunteer Program Leader. He has a M.S. in Atmospheric Science from SUNY-Albany.



### *MIC's Corner Continued*

Finally, I want give a fond public farewell to one of our General Forecasters, Luis Rosa, as he recently accepted a promotion to Senior Forecaster at the San Juan WFO. Luis was both our Tropical Weather and Flash Flood Program Leader, and his expertise in those areas, along with his general forecasting and operational skills will be sorely missed. Best wishes to Luis as he continues to progress through his career!

If you have any questions or comments about the NWS Baltimore/Washington Weather Forecast Office, please email me at [James.E.Lee@noaa.gov](mailto:James.E.Lee@noaa.gov), or phone me 703-996-2200, extension 222.

## Winter Weather Workshop *Andrew Woodcock, Senior Forecaster*

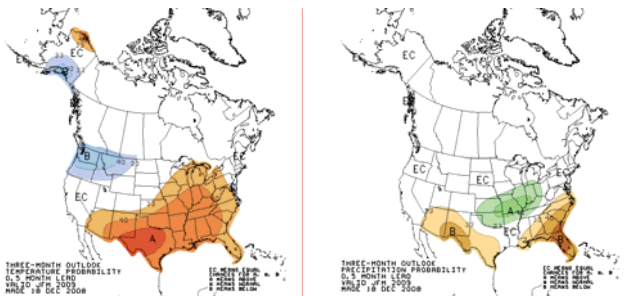
In November thoughts of winter weather fill the thoughts of the Sterling NWS forecast staff, and this year mid-autumn snowflakes filled the air as well. Will this be a harbinger of the winter to come? Hard to say - the outlook from the Climate Prediction Center gives the Mid Atlantic region equal chances of above/below normal temperatures and precipitation for the winter months. Regardless, on November 17 a winter weather workshop was held at the Sterling forecast office.

Much of this years' meeting dealt with supporting our customers, both what we can do for them, and what they do when we issue winter watches/advisories/warnings. Agencies in attendance included Dulles Airport Operations, VDOT, MDOT, PEPCO, and Channel 9's Topper Shutt. A key sentiment from the customers serving the public was that due to the current state of the economy their financial status is tighter than ever. It costs thousands of dollars each hour to put snow plows and road treatment trucks into operation. Hence an accurate forecast – not only amount and precipitation type, but also start and end times, is extremely important to these people. It can save them and the public scarce funds during this economic downturn.

In the afternoon, the customers toured our new forecast area, learned how we put a forecast together, and met with several of the forecast staff they may be dealing with this winter. Afterwards the forecast staff returned to the conference room to review the winter weather of 2007-08, with detailed looks at the freezing rain event of Feb '08, and the sleet storm of Feb '07. Upcoming winter drills and exercises will help to prepare forecasters for whatever lies ahead for the winter of 2008-09.

## January – February – March Outlook

NOAA's National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center created these January – February – March temperature and precipitation outlooks during mid March. 'EC' means Equal Chance, 'A' stands for Above Normal, while 'B' is Below Normal. These are probabilistic forecasts; the forecast probability anomaly is the difference between the actual forecast probability of the verifying observation falling in a given category and its climatological value.



Climate Prediction Center outlooks, discussions and explanations are available at:

[http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long\\_range/index.php](http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/index.php)

## Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office Open House a Huge Success!

*Nikole Winstead Listemaa, Senior Forecaster*



In October 2008, the National Weather Service Baltimore/Washington Forecast office held its bi-annual Open House. The event took place on October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. The day before Open House, Tony Perkins from Fox 5 Morning Show,

broadcasted live from our office. In addition to the regular Open House activities, our new facility was dedicated. U.S. Congresswoman Donna Edwards from Maryland was the keynote speaker at the Dedication Ceremony. Additionally, television meteorologist Topper Shutt and NWS Deputy Director Vickie Nadolski were among the other speakers at the Dedication.

Overall, around 3000 people attended Open House in October. NWS Baltimore/Washington Staff gave tours, launched weather balloons, made presentations and conducted science experiments. There was also a very special performance called "Weather & Prose" that was performed by Chris Strong and Andrew Woodcock at the end of each day. Sue Palka (Fox 5) and Bob Ryan (NBC 4) hosted and read poetry for the performance.

*For those who missed the Open House in October, the next one is planned for April 2010.*

## Other Outreach of Note

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, Steve Zubrick gave an office tour to Michael Grogan. Michael is the new weekend on air Meteorologist for NBC 25 in Hagerstown, MD.

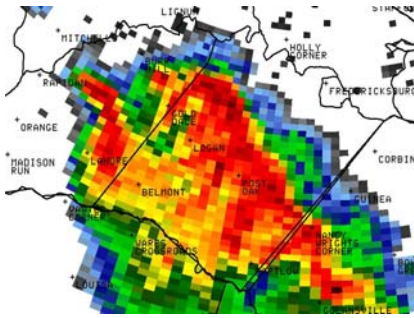
In September, Chris Strong attended an Emergency Preparedness Information Fair in Allegany County. Chris chatted with the public about weather threats and distributed brochures.

Two StormReady Counties visited our Office in October. Chris Strong conducted tours for Allegany and St. Mary's Counties. Office visits/tours are required to maintain StormReady status.

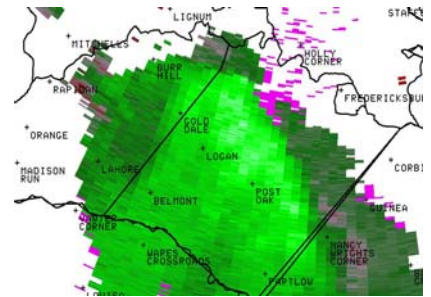
Senior Management gave a tour to Congressional Staffer Adrienne Simonson on October 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Storm Data of Note (July – September 2008)

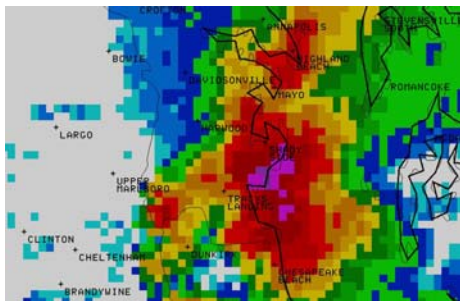
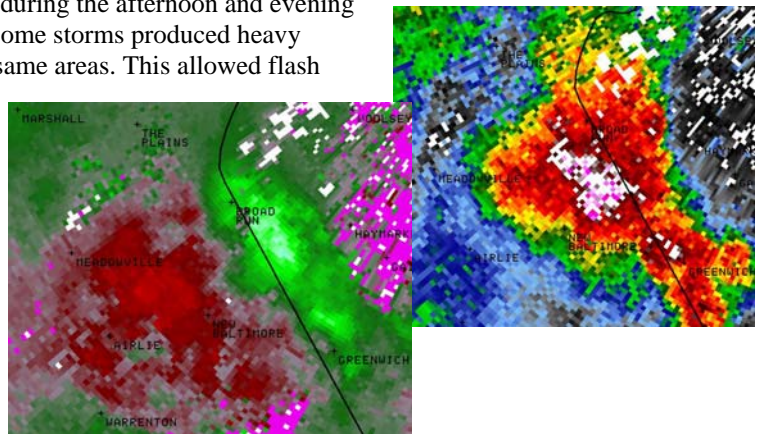
*Brian Lasorsa, General Forecaster*



An upper level disturbance moved through the Mid Atlantic during the afternoon and evening of July 4th. This system combined with a weak surface front along with plenty of instability to trigger showers and thunderstorms. Some of the thunderstorms did become severe across lower southern Maryland and the piedmont of Virginia, producing damaging winds and large hail.



A slow moving cold front moved towards the Mid Atlantic Coast on July 23rd. This front provided the focus for showers and thunderstorms to develop during the afternoon and evening hours. With high amounts of moisture in place, some storms produced heavy rainfall. Storms also moved repeatedly over the same areas. This allowed flash flooding to occur across the Baltimore metropolitan area, resulting in several road closures and water rescues. Severe thunderstorms also occurred, with gusty winds downing trees and power lines. There were also a few reports of large hail. Two EF-0 tornadoes were also confirmed in Rappahannock and Prince William counties.



A potent upper-level disturbance tracked across the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas on August 14<sup>th</sup>. This disturbance produced enough instability for showers and thunderstorms to develop. Due to a good deal of cold air in the mid-levels of the atmosphere, many of the thunderstorms produced large hail. The worst conditions were across the Baltimore metropolitan area where hail to the size of quarters affected a few locations.

Tropical Storm Hanna tracked up the Mid-Atlantic coast on the September 6th with maximum sustained winds around 50 mph. Hanna tracked across eastern North Carolina during the early afternoon hours before turning northeast across southeastern Virginia later in the afternoon. Hanna eventually tracked across the Chesapeake Bay and into Delaware during the evening hours. With the track of Hanna being to the east, the strongest winds were also confined mainly to our east. However, Hanna was still responsible for heavy rain along with Tropical Storm force winds across much of the region. Rainfall amounts totaled around 4 to 8 inches across many locations with locally higher amounts around 9 inches. Numerous roads were closed throughout northern and central Virginia as well as Maryland due to flash flooding. Tropical Storm force winds were responsible for downed trees and power lines across many parts of the region as well. The worst conditions occurred during the late morning and afternoon hours as the storm passed by just to the east.

## Skywarn Corner

Thanks to all Spotters for your reports. Please remember to provide storm reports as soon as possible. These reports are extremely valuable in the warning decision making process as well as for our verification effort. The ideal way to report hazardous weather is through Phone or Amateur Radio. There are several ways to report.

**Telephone:** 703-996-2200 or 800-253-7091

**Radio Call Sign:** WX4LWX

**Email:** [LWX-Report@noaa.gov](mailto:LWX-Report@noaa.gov)

*\*Please call or use Amateur Radio to report time-sensitive information such as tornadoes, hail, wind damage, flooding, ice accumulation, etc.*

### What to Report:

**Time** (start and end)

**Location** (State, County, City/distance and direction from city)

**Tornado** (circulation on the ground)

**Funnel** (not on the ground)

**Storm Rotation/Wall Cloud**

**Hail:** size compared to a coin and depth on ground

**Heavy Rain:** measured 1 inch or more (duration)

**Flooding:** water out of banks or covering roadways

**Wind:** 50 MPH or greater (measured or estimated)

**Damage:** generally downed trees and/or power lines

**Snow Accumulation:** every 2 inches, storm total

For more information on upcoming classes, check out the website:

<http://weather.gov/washington/skywarn/classes.html>

Please email any changes to your contact information to:

[Nikole.Winstead.Listemaa@noaa.gov](mailto:Nikole.Winstead.Listemaa@noaa.gov)

*Thank you for your time as a SKYWARN Spotter!*

## Climate Summary

*Jared Klein, General Forecaster*

The average monthly temperature at Reagan National Airport for August 2008 was near normal. September 2008 featured much above normal temperatures and was the eleventh warmest on record dating back to 1872. On the September 4<sup>th</sup>, the high temperature of 95F tied the old daily record high that was set in 1985. Similar to August, October's monthly temperature averaged near normal. At Reagan National Airport, precipitation was well below normal for both August and October with less than half of the normal precipitation each month. There was a 13- and 23-day period with no measureable precipitation during August and October, respectively. Conversely, September 2008 featured above normal precipitation mainly due to the heavy rainfall from Tropical Storm Hanna on September 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. A daily record rainfall of 3.5 inches was set on September 6<sup>th</sup>, breaking the old daily record rainfall of 1.55 inches set in 1996.

At Baltimore-Washington International Airport, the average monthly temperature was slightly below normal for August 2008, a few degrees above normal for September 2008, and near normal for October 2008. Both August and October were considerably dry months at Baltimore-Washington International Airport with less than half of the normal precipitation each month. There was a 13- and 23-day stretch without any measureable rainfall during August and October, respectively. On the other hand, monthly precipitation for September totaled 7.22 inches, which was well above normal. Heavy rainfall from Tropical Storm Hanna produced 1.65 inches on September 6<sup>th</sup> while multiple thunderstorms dropped 3.57 inches of rain during the morning and afternoon of September 27<sup>th</sup>.



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<http://weather.gov/washington>

43858 Weather Service Rd.

Sterling, VA 20166

703-996-2200



Editor: Nikole Winstead Listemaa