

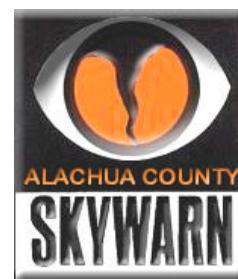
## DO WE REALLY NEED STORM SPOTTERS?

The weather service uses NEXRAD Doppler radar to see what is happening in the skies around it. Unfortunately, radar can only see in a straight line. Because the earth is curved, the farther away that you get from the radar, the less it sees of the earth's surface. A radar blind space develops near the ground, and it gets taller the farther away from the radar that you get. This means that the radar can see things happening high up in the sky which might indicate that something is *most likely* going on at lower levels; but what it *cannot* see is what is actually going on at the ground level. (This radar-dark area actually comes out to be around two- or three-thousand feet in height in the Gainesville vicinity.) The NWS, therefore, needs people at the scene who can see, at the ground level, what the radar cannot, and who can offer some form of *confirmation*, if possible, of any radar-indicated events going on.

...That is where you come in.

The NWS uses the input from spotters to help them in issuing more accurate watches and warnings for the public. Alachua County SKYWARN's spotters report any severe weather events that they may see occurring within Alachua County to NWS-JAX, as well as to the Alachua County Office of Emergency Management (ACOEM)..

Alachua County SKYWARN meets on the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM at Alachua Co. Fire & Rescue Headquarters, 913 SE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Gainesville.



Alachua County SKYWARN  
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## ALACHUA COUNTY SKYWARN

SEVERE WEATHER STORM SPOTTER PROGRAM



Watching The Weather!

Visit our web page at  
<http://www.afn.org/~skywarn>

# WHAT IS ALACHUA COUNTY SKYWARN?

**Alachua County SKYWARN** is an organization of trained volunteers who scan the skies for specific severe weather events and who then report them to the National Weather Service Field Office in Jacksonville (NWS-JAX). SKYWARN is a part of the NWS **Severe Storm Reporting Networks** program. “*The fundamental objective of Severe Storm Reporting Networks is to provide timely and accurate reports of severe weather in support of the National Weather Service (NWS) Severe Local Storm Warning Program.*” (From the **NWS Operations Manual**, Part-B, Ch. 21, and Para. 1.)

## WHO CAN BE A SPOTTER?

...Anyone. Spotters come from all walks of life and, here in Alachua County, they include teachers, farmers, lawyers, paralegals, legal secretaries, computer programmers, police and fire/rescue personnel, TV meteorologists, newspaper reporters, amateur radio operators, and even an ex-Air Force meteorologist who flew aboard hurricane hunter aircraft! All it requires to become a spotter is an interest in the weather, and just a *little* training.



## ALL RIGHT. SO, HOW DO I BECOME A SPOTTER?

About twice a year, we host training classes which will teach you what you need to know in order to properly identify and report severe weather events. Employees from NWS-JAX teach the classes, which range from an hour-and-a-half (for Basic Spotter Training) to up to three hours (for the Advanced). On occasion, NWS-JAX also offers specialized classes on subjects such as *Hurricane Preparedness*. The lecture sessions include slides, video, and a handout booklet. There is an open-book test at the end of the class (for the Basic and Advanced classes).



Upon completion of the Basic Spotter Training class, spotters are given a laminated ID card with an assigned spotter ID number upon the face. This number is used when reporting events to NWS-JAX.

After completion of the Advanced Spotter Training class, spotters are mailed a handsome *Certificate Of Training* suitable for framing.



## SPOTTERS AND HAM RADIO

Amateur radio operators are especially useful in SKYWARN because of their widely versatile and readily available public service communications capabilities. “Hams,” as they are called, use local area “repeaters” to conduct coordinated, extended range SKYWARN net operations during times of severe weather. Non-hams may also find these frequencies interesting and informative to listen to. If you are not a ham, but you would like to become one, please feel free to contact Warren Croke at (352) 378-0935; or e-mail him at [wcroke@worldnet.att.net](mailto:wcroke@worldnet.att.net). Alachua County offers three ham clubs to choose from: the *Gainesville Amateur Radio Society*, the *Gator Amateur Radio Club*, (for UF students) and the *Santa Fe Community College Amateur Radio Society* (for SFCC students).

## SKYWARN NET FREQUENCIES:

146.820 MHz – K4GNV – G’ville ARS  
146.910 MHz – W4DFU - Gator ARC  
146.985 MHz – K4GNV – G’ville ARS