SPOTTER TIPS AND SPOTTER SAFETY

SKYWARN spotters provide critical information for all hazards in support of the National Weather Service. Spotting for severe local storms can be dangerous and requires great skill. Accordingly, this card focuses on these types of events.

*Our best spotters practice safety first! Don't be a victim in your efforts to help others.

*Most tornadoes move from southwest to northeast. The best viewing angles are southeast of the storm. Knowing the movement of the storm is important to report. Also knowing storm movement is critical to staying out of its way. If the tornado appears not to be moving, look out! It might be moving directly toward you.

*The largest hail generally falls just preceding the tornado. Report the size of the largest hailstones. Use the ruler at the bottom of this card.

*When reporting wind speeds or gusts, tell whether they are measured or estimated. The modified Beaufort Scale below will help you estimate speeds.

25-30 mph: large branches moving; whistling heard in wires
30-40 mph: whole trees moving; hard to walk against wind
40-45 mph: breaks twigs and small branches, impedes walking
45-55 mph: larger branches and weak limbs may break; slight structural damage occurs
55-65 mph: moderate structural and tree damage
>65 mph: heavy to severe structural and tree damage

*Tornadoes and rainshafts can look alike. Look for rotation and upward motion. Also, look for other visual clues, such as the wall cloud, overshooting tops, storm rotation, etc. If you aren't certain of what you see, contact your National Weather Service office.

*Report accurately: **a *tornado*** is a violently rotating column of air in contact with the ground; **a *funnel cloud*** is a violently rotating column of air not reaching the ground. Be observant—sometimes there is no visible connection between the cloud and the ground, but the tornado is causing debris to be blown about at the surface. **A *wall cloud*** is a lowering of the cloud base below the storm tower.