



## **Spotter Do's and Don't s**

*Please read the following carefully. Be sure you understand what you need to do and not do.*

### **DO'S:**

Do ... attend spotter training classes as much as possible.

Do ... surf the Internet for more information about spotting severe weather. (i. e. SPC web site)

Do ... have a watch, writing implement, note pad, cell phone, and a colored Spotter Quick Reference Guide with you when spotting.

Do ... make an honest effort to make an accurate report (i.e. time, location, conditions – what you saw or experienced, movement, destructiveness).

Do ... reference your severe weather report location to the cultural/political center of the nearest town, city, village – such as 1.5 NNE Madison.

Do ... provide in your report what direction you are looking at while viewing what you see (rotating wall cloud, funnel cloud, or tornado), since you cannot determine accurately in the heat of the battle, how far away what you see is from your location.

Do ... spot with a trusted partner, especially if you are mobile. Two heads are better than one in this business.

Do ... place the safety of yourself and your family first! Your report is second priority.

Do ... Take a deep breath, and try to remain calm, and get the job done.

Do ... utilize all communications channels that have been established for you and/or your group, and follow proper format and procedures.

Do ... ensure the National Weather Service receives your report via 9-1-1, or our 800 number, or ham frequency, or E-Spotter.

Do ... When calling your report in identify yourself as a “trained severe weather spotter” if you call 9-1-1 or the National Weather Service. They will then trust your report and not have to dispatch a squad car to your location to verify what you saw (big waste of time!)

Do ... be willing to share some of your photos of any severe weather with the National Weather Service for educational purposes or online stories (it's in the public domain on our web site).

Do ... feel good about what your doing as a spotter. You are just as important as any of your fellow spotters.

## **DON'TS:**

Don't ... assume that you know everything there is to know about spotting! Keep an open mind. You will learn something new every year.

Don't ... make it difficult for emergency response people to do their jobs. Stay away from the scene unless you are specifically asked for help.

Don't ... just take pictures or shoot video and then forget to relay your spotter report.

Don't ... view spotting as a game or procedure that will make you more important than your fellow comrades! Keep a level head, and do your very best.

Don't ... look down at, or ridicule and harass another spotter for making a mistake! You may well make the next mistake! We all have made mistakes, and no one is perfect.

Don't ... get mad at the National Weather Service if you don't see your severe weather report online in either a Local Storm Report or in a Public Information Statement or in some top 10 news of the day. We receive hundreds of reports from the 22 counties we service.

Don't ... assume that you have a tornado just because you see something that looks like a funnel cloud. You must observe indications of ground based, rotational spray effects (rotating debris or dirt) underneath persistent rotation at the cloud base (with or without a visible condensation funnel) in order to classify it as a tornado. If what you see lacks any of what was mentioned above, or especially if it's not rotating about a vertical axis, *it's not a funnel cloud or tornado, no matter how scary it appears.*

Don't ... get caught up in the game of trying to be the first person to call in a tornado report! Spotting is a duty of being 100% correct, not a game of being first.

Don't ... call in or relay a report if you're not sure what you're looking at. You must be 100% sure of what you are looking at! Accuracy is the highest priority, after your safety. We would rather have no report than a false report!

Don't ... forget to pat yourself on the back, for your volunteering and public safety efforts.

## **When reporting rotating wall clouds, funnel clouds, or tornadoes...**

Is it in the correct place in the storm? Best view? Is it rotating?

Do you see visible dust or debris pivoting around the funnel near the ground, with a cloud based rotation directly above the ground effects? It's probably a tornado. *Provide frequent updates.*

In which direction are you looking when you observe this feature (rotating wall cloud, funnel cloud, or tornado). Is it off in the distance, or up close?

Don't try to estimate the distance between you and what you observe. *We don't need it.*

## **When reporting hail...**

Use only "small marble" to describe small hail that's about ½ inch in diameter. Do not use the phrase "large marble sized hail" because marbles come in different sizes. If you cannot measure the hail, use coins, or other known objects to describe the hail size. Report the sizes of the largest hailstones, using the largest diameter of an odd shaped hailstone.

### **When reporting damaging thunderstorm winds...**

Did you estimate or measure the wind gust? Did the wind actually produce damage?

If damage occurred, please describe what was damaged, character, extent of damage.

Remember, *be specific when providing details about what you see!* We don't need false information!

If you have any questions about this document, or if you need more information about becoming a severe weather spotter, please contact the the Green Bay office of the National Weather Service.

