

# Weather Evaluation Toolkit



<p>What is the weather going to do today? Do I need to be concerned?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hazardous Weather Outlook (Text)</li> <li>✓ Enhanced Hazardous Weather Outlook (Graphical)</li> <li>✓ SPC Outlooks</li> <li>✓ Weather Story</li> </ul>
<p>Where do I find additional detailed information I need?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Point and Click Forecast</li> <li>✓ Hourly Weather Graph</li> <li>✓ Area Forecast Discussion (AFD)</li> <li>✓ Conference Call/Slide Briefings (if available)</li> <li>✓ NWSChat</li> </ul>
<p>I know what is expected, how do I monitor?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hazardous Weather Outlook updates</li> <li>✓ SPC Outlook updates</li> <li>✓ Weather Story updates</li> <li>✓ Radar</li> <li>✓ Graphical Nowcast</li> <li>✓ SPC Mesoscale Discussions (MD's)</li> <li>✓ Watches</li> <li>✓ Area Forecast Discussion (AFD) updates</li> <li>✓ Warnings/Statements</li> <li>✓ NWSChat</li> </ul>

NWS Chicago Weather Watcher Page: [http://www.weather.gov/chicago/wx\\_watcher](http://www.weather.gov/chicago/wx_watcher)

**Hazardous Weather Outlook (Text) (EHWOTab):** Outlines hazardous weather expected over the next 7 days, with a focus on today and tonight. May be expanded to include additional information about what, when, and where when thunderstorms are expected. Issued by 5 AM, 11 AM, 5 PM with additional updates as needed.

**Enhanced Hazardous Weather Outlook (Graphical) (EHWOTab):** Provides a map based depiction of expected hazardous weather over the next 7 days. The table below the map defines each of the color coded risk categories. Please note that the definition will change for each weather element. Updated by 5 am, 5 pm, and as needed.

**SPC Outlooks (Severe Weather Tab):** Indicate the chance of severe weather occurring within 25 miles of a point. Generally, the lower categories represent areas with the greatest uncertainty and smallest expected coverage of storm reports. Conversely, the higher categories represent the greatest perceived threat, confidence, and coverage.

Please see <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/misc/about.html#Severe Weather Risks> for more information.

**Weather Story ([Forecast Tab](#)):** An image depicting upcoming weather. Typically focuses on the most significant/hazardous weather but may also provide an overview of general conditions during periods of quiet weather.

**Your Forecast ([Forecast Tab](#)):** Also known as the Point and Click Forecast. Enter the City, State; zip code at the top of the page to access the forecast for the 1.5 mi by 1.5 mi square area centered on that point. Temperatures, dewpoint, and sky cover are shown out to 7 days. Wind speed and direction are shown through the next 3 days.

**Hourly Weather Graph ([accessible via the table on the bottom right hand side of the Your Forecast forecast page](#)):** An hourly view of all forecast elements. All elements except the amount of precipitation are available in hourly format out through 7 days. In general, the best way to interpret the graph is to look at the trends over time versus relying on an individual value for each hour. The same information can also be viewed in a table format via the “Tabular Forecast” link on the bottom right hand table.

**Area Forecast Discussion (AFD) ([Forecast Tab](#)):** A scientific, technical discussion providing the reasons behind forecast decisions. The discussions may also discuss forecaster confidence and may touch on alternative scenarios if forecast confidence is lower than desired.

**Graphical Nowcast (<http://www.weather.gov/chicago>):** A visual depiction of hazardous weather expectations over the next hour to several hours. If a graphical nowcast exists, it will appear via the link above. If one does not exist or expires, the image will disappear.

**SPC Mesoscale Discussions ([Severe Weather Tab](#)):** Focuses on severe thunderstorm potential for the next 6 hours with an emphasis on the next 1-3 hours. Also issued for heavy snow, blizzard conditions and freezing rain. These are often technical, but the probability that a watch will be issued will likely be the most useful portion.

**Severe Thunderstorm and Tornado Watches ([Severe Weather Tab](#)):** Indicate that conditions are favorable for severe weather to occur over the next several hours. This is a good time to begin monitoring radar if not already doing so.

**Winter Storm/Blizzard Watches, Advisories, and Warnings ([Winter Weather Tab](#)):** Indicates when we have moderate or higher confidence that a winter storm will impact the region. A warning or advisory may be issued replacing a watch. An advisory should not be seen as a downgrade of a watch. Timing, snow intensity, amount of snow, impacts, temperatures, and other hazards will be highlighted in the watch, warning, or advisory product. Definition of Watches/Warnings/Advisories:

<http://www.weather.gov/chicago/headlines/>

**Severe Thunderstorm and Tornado Warnings/Severe Weather Statements ([Severe Weather Tab and NWSChat Bot](#)):** Issued for specific areas (outlined by polygons) where thunderstorms are expected to produce hail greater than or equal to 1 inch in diameter, wind gusts of 58 mph or stronger and/or tornadoes. Severe Weather Statements should also be monitored as they provide updates on storm location, reports, and intensity.

**NWSChat:** A means for emergency management/public safety officials to communicate with NWS Chicago’s staff. The “lotchat” chat room is a venue for reporting non-life threatening conditions and to ask questions regarding the forecast. It also provides an automated feed of NWS products. Please call the office with any time-critical information such as tornado reports, hazmat incidents, aircraft incidents, etc.

- Request NWSChat access: <https://nwschat.weather.gov/create.php> Please select Weather Forecast Office Chicago (LOT) as your primary office.
- NWSChat Live: <https://nwschat.weather.gov/live/> (mobile friendly)
- A walkthrough of NWSChat Live: [https://nwschat.weather.gov/NWSChat\\_Live\\_Demo.mp4](https://nwschat.weather.gov/NWSChat_Live_Demo.mp4)
- NWSChat frequently asked questions: <https://nwschat.weather.gov/FAQ.php>
- NWSChat Bot NWS Product Feed – **NO ACCOUNT NEEDED:** <http://weather.im/iembot/>

### Impact Based Warning Threat Tags

The information added to severe thunderstorm and tornado warnings and follow up statements will be evident within the text, through Hazard, Source and Impact information. Additional information will also be placed at the bottom of the warning with the addition of the threat tags outlined in the chart below. The threat tags are designed to communicate hazard and risk information only, and are not designed to identify tornado intensity in relationship to an EF-scale.

Visit <http://www.weather.gov/impacts> for more information.

Tornado Tag	
TORNADO...RADAR INDICATED	Evidence on radar and near storm environment is supportive of a tornado. A tornado may be developing or ongoing, but no confirmation has been received.
TORNADO...OBSERVED	Tornado is confirmed by spotters, law enforcement, etc.
Tornado Damage Threat Tag	
TORNADO DAMAGE THREAT...CONSIDERABLE	There is credible evidence that a tornado, capable of producing considerable damage, is imminent or ongoing.
TORNADO DAMAGE THREAT...CATASTROPHIC	A severe threat to human life and catastrophic damage from a tornado is occurring. This will only be used when reliable sources confirm a violent tornado.
Tornado Tag In Severe Thunderstorm Warnings	
TORNADO...POSSIBLE	A severe thunderstorm has some potential for producing a tornado although forecaster confidence is not high enough to issue a Tornado Warning.

## **Communications**

Contact us by your preferred means, BUT CALL US WITH:

- Tornado/funnel reports
- Life-threatening/urgent information
- Significant damage
- Injuries, fatalities
- No response in NWSChat

## **NWS Chicago Phone Numbers**

(800) 681-2972 Storm Reports, 24 hrs (unlisted)

(815) 834-0651 Operations # for EM's/Public Safety, 24 hrs (unlisted)

(815) 834-1435 General Public (listed) 8am-8pm