



Summer 2005 Edition

Volume 1, Issue 1

Special Weather Notes

- Summer Begins June 21, 2005 at 146 AM CDT
- June 19-25, 2005 National Lightning Awareness Week
- Hurricane Season: June 1st through November 30th

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Name the NWS Central Alabama Quarterly Newsletter!

Welcome to our brand new quarterly newsletter directly from *your* local National Weather Service Office in Calera, Alabama! This is a new project to help communicate important weather news to our partners including Emergency Managers, media, weather enthusiasts, and the public. This newsletter will provide keen insight into personnel at our office, local projects, and other interesting weather stuff. We look forward to any comments or suggestions that you may have about our newsletter.

Now to the contest...we are looking for a reader

to name our new quarterly newsletter. Name suggestions should be creative, weather related, and unique. If you have an idea for a name, please send it to the Publisher at Kristin.Hurley@noaa.gov or mail in suggestions to:

Newsletter Name Suggestions
National Weather Service
465 Weathervane Road
Calera, Alabama 35040

The winner will be announced (if they want) in the next edition scheduled for release in September.

**Meet the New Weather Guy In Town:
Meteorologist-In-Charge Jim Stefkovich**

Veteran meteorologist Jim Stefkovich is the new Meteorologist-In-Charge (MIC) of the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Calera, Alabama. Stefkovich replaces former MIC Ken Graham who was promoted to Scientific Operations Division Chief at Southern Region Headquarters. "Jim Stefkovich offers a wealth of meteorological expertise and experience in severe weather forecasting as well as considerable skill in building vital service delivery relationships with local communities and our partners," said Bill Proenza, National Weather Service Southern Region Director. "His leadership abilities will also serve to continue and enhance the fine record established by the outstanding staff in the Birmingham office."

Here is a timeline of Stefkovich's career:

- * Student Trainee/Computer Programmer at NWS Techniques Development Lab in Silver Springs, Maryland (1982).
- * Meteorological Observer at the Weather Service Meteorological Observation site in Waycross, Georgia (1984).
- * Forecaster Intern at the National Weather Service in Lake Charles, Louisiana (1985).
- * General Forecaster at the National Weather Service in Atlanta, Georgia (1988).
- * Next Generation Weather Radar (NEXRAD) regional focal point at Southern Region Headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas (1991).

- * Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) at the National Weather Service in Fort Worth, Texas (1993).
- * Meteorologist-In-Charge at the National Weather Service in Jackson, Mississippi (2000).
- * Meteorologist In Charge at the National Weather Service in Chicago, Illinois (2003).

His hands on experience in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Georgia provide Stefkovich with an excellent perspective on the volatile nature of weather in Alabama. That experience will be a considerable asset in providing the citizens of Central Alabama with the best possible forecast and warning services.

Stefkovich holds a bachelor's degree in Meteorology from The Pennsylvania State University (1983). He is also a member of the American Meteorological Society and National Weather Association. Stefkovich has also served on several national NWS teams, including the Service Assessment Team for the deadly April 8, 1998 tornado outbreak in Alabama.



**Meteorologist
In Charge
Jim Stefkovich,
NWS
Birmingham**

Latest Central Alabama NWS Outreach Activities By Faith Borden

The school year is quickly wrapping up and so are the office tours associated with public, private, and home schooling. Outreach activities will continue through the summer once camps get into full swing. If you know of a group that is interested in learning about the weather or having a guest speaker, please let us know at 205-664-3010.

To this date, the Birmingham office has conducted 16 storm spotter talks this year. Quite a few talks had to be cancelled or postponed due to severe weather or damage surveys. Thank you for your continued understanding and flexibility. If your group or organization is interested in learning about severe weather or becoming a trained spotter please contact us. Storm spotters are our eyes and ears in the field. A spotter report is worth "its weight in gold," to a radar operator during a severe weather event. An accurate and timely spotter report can help a radar operator decide if a warning should be extended or moved into the next county.

Other news on the outreach front: meteorologists David

Wilfing, Jessica Smith, and Faith Borden participated in the annual Earth day activities in Selma. Once again, a very successful event was held where over 1500 elementary students and teachers from Dallas County learned the **3 R's**; Recycle, Reuse, and Reduce Waste. The office tornado simulator was a big hit! Students had no idea they were learning about safety rules for severe weather while playing with the tornado simulator.



Jessica Smith and the famous Tornado Simulator (back) are pictured with a Kindergarten Class from Southside Primary School in Selma, Alabama

Tuscaloosa County Becomes FloodReady By Michael Garrison

We are all aware of the traditional threats during severe weather season; tornadoes, straight line winds, and large hail. However, the number one weather related killer in the United States remains flooding. FloodReady is a program designed by the National Weather Service in Calera to help better prepare communities for flash floods and long term river flooding.

central Alabama this Spring season and no doubt will have other floods in the near future.

This past January, Tuscaloosa County become the first county to achieve FloodReady recognition in the country!



Michael Garrison (right) giving FloodReady plaque to Tuscaloosa Mayor AL DuPont.

Summertime Sparks

By Jessica Smith

Do you know that the odds of being struck by lightning in a given year are 1 in 700,000? With these odds, it seems to be an unlikely occurrence. However, across the country, Alabama ranks 7th in the number of lightning deaths.

National Lightning Safety Awareness Week is June 19-25, 2005. Now is a great time to review important lightning safety rules. The onset of summer brings an increase in the number of outdoor activities. It is extremely important to be aware of what to do and where to go when lightning threatens.

30/30 RULE

The main lightning safety rule is called the 30/30 rule. The first "30" refers to the number of seconds between seeing the lightning flash and hearing thunder. If these two occur within 30 seconds of one another, you are close enough to be struck! Take cover immediately!

The last "30" is for the 30 minutes you must wait to safely resume outdoor activities after hearing the last thunder clap or seeing the last flash. So, as you spend time outdoors this summer, keep an eye to the sky and remember that lightning kills. Please play it safe!



FloodReady

does not mean flood proof!

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS:

NWS (205)664-3010 • APC 1-800-LAKES11

<p>Flood Facts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six inches of Fast-moving flood water can knock you off your feet. • Nearly half of all flash flood fatalities are vehicle-related. • Flood deaths affect all age groups. 	<p>Flood Safety Rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If flooding occurs, get to higher ground. Stay away from flood prone areas. • Avoid flooded areas or those with rapid water flow. • Do not attempt to cross a flowing stream. Never drive on flooded roads. • Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams and washes, particularly when threatening conditions exist. • Do not let children play near high water, storm drains or ditches. • Monitor NOAA Weather Radio or your local media for weather related info. 	
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MORE INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT:

www.srb.noaa.gov/bmx • www.srb.noaa.gov/tadd



The FloodReady program works through awareness, education, and preventive planning. We have already had examples of moderate to major flooding in

They are the second applicant to achieve FloodReady status. The town of Wadley was the first, in June 2004. The process is very in-depth, and may take several months to complete, as each applicant must satisfy all the criteria set forth by the FloodReady committee.

If your community, town, or county has flooding problems and would like more information on the FloodReady program, contact our Service Hydrologist, Roger McNeil, at 205-664-3010 x228. You can also send an email to Roger.Mcneil@noaa.gov or FloodReady focal point Michael.Garrison@noaa.gov

Hurricane Season on the Horizon: Time to Review Safety Plans

By Michael Scotten

In 2004, Category 3 Hurricane Ivan struck Alabama and caused widespread damage across the state. If another hurricane were to strike right now, would you know what to do?

Governor Bob Riley declared the week of Sunday, May 15 – Saturday, May 21, 2005 as Hurricane Awareness Week in Alabama. During this week, Alabamians are encouraged to learn and/or review the proper safety precautions necessary for protecting lives and property when a hurricane or tropical system strikes. Hurricane season begins on June 1 and continues through the end of November, so now is the time to prepare for the upcoming season!

Although most hurricanes and tropical systems usually affect South Alabama and locations near the Gulf Coast hardest, they can affect Central Alabama as well. The main hazards from hurricanes across Central Alabama are:

Flooding

Surprising to most people, flooding is the main hazard from hurricanes and tropical systems across Central Alabama. Flooding has been responsible for more than half of

the deaths caused by hurricanes and tropical systems in the past 30 years. Rainfall amounts of five, ten, or even twenty inches can fall from them. On September 16, 2004, Hurricane Ivan brought a record 24-hour rainfall of 9.75 inches to Birmingham, which caused major flash flooding in parts of the city!



Flash Flooding in Homewood during Ivan

Damaging Wind

Damaging wind is another common hazard from hurricanes and tropical systems affecting Central Alabama. Strong winds can affect areas far inland and cause considerable property damage if the hurricane or tropical system is large and strong

enough. When Hurricane Ivan struck last year, wind gusts of 60 to 80 mph caused property damage and numerous trees and power lines to fall across the central part of the state.



A Common Scene Across Central Alabama with Hurricane Ivan

Tornadoes

In addition, tornadoes are possible with hurricanes and tropical systems. They usually develop on the eastern side of the hurricane or tropical system where strong winds change rapidly with height. During Hurricane Ivan, a total of 113 tornadoes were reported including 9 F0 tornadoes across southern and eastern Alabama.

Hurricane Word Search

From the 15 Underlined Words in the above article

D	F	B	I	R	M	I	N	G	H	A	M
G	A	T	S	I	N	L	A	N	D	L	S
E	L	M	L	N	O	V	E	M	B	E	R
H	A	Z	A	R	D	S	L	T	O	S	C
E	B	S	N	G	W	O	M	D	B	F	R
R	A	L	T	D	I	V	A	N	L	L	A
T	M	U	G	E	D	N	Y	U	T	O	M
E	A	K	U	M	R	E	G	H	J	O	S
C	H	I	S	O	B	N	O	W	Y	D	N
O	N	E	T	M	I	S	F	B	I	I	T
S	T	E	S	K	L	A	P	J	U	N	E
P	H	U	R	R	I	C	A	N	E	G	D

Saffir-Simpson Scale for Hurricane Classification		
Strength	Description	Wind Speed (MPH)
Category 1	Minimal	74- 95 mph
Category 2	Moderate	96-110 mph
Category 3	Extensive	111-130 mph
Category 4	Extreme	131-155 mph
Category 5	Catastrophic	> than 155 mph
Tropical System Classification		
Tropical Depression		< than 39 mph
Tropical Storm		39 – 73 mph
Hurricane		> than 74 mph

2005 Atlantic Hurricane Names

Arlene	Harvey	Ophelia
Bret	Irene	Philippe
Cindy	Jose	Rita
Dennis	Katrina	Stan
Emily	Lee	Tammy
Franklin	Maria	Vince
Gert	Nate	Wilma



**Mark's
Wacky
Weather
World**

Bizarre Electrical Phenomena... Ball Lightning

By Mark Linhares

As we all know, Central Alabama receives a fair amount of thunderstorm days during the summer months. Therefore, the inaugural installment of Mark's Wacky Weather World introduces the rare phenomenon of Ball Lightning.

Ball Lightning remains one of the greatest scientific mysteries known to mankind. Great speculation revolves around the subject. Is Ball Lightning really lightning at all? Is it a form of St. Elmo's

Fire? Some people still do not believe it exists and disagree with its exact origin. Today, most scientists agree that there is some sort of phenomenon being observed but no sensible theories exist to explain all the subtleties involved.



So what do we know? The phenomenon known as Ball Lightning comes in a myriad of shapes and sizes and occurs in seemingly contrasting weather conditions. According to eyewitness accounts, Ball Lightning usually appears as a mysterious glowing ball of light that meanders through the air. It normally appears about the size of a softball, but can range from the size of a pea to the size of an 18-wheeler. This phenomenon has been ob-

served in nearly every color of the rainbow and can even change colors. It has been experienced during thunderstorm activity and during broad daylight. Ball Lightning can pass completely through walls or melt them. It can disappear silently or go out with quite a bang.

All I know is that if I ever encounter some glowing orb, throwing sparks, making hissing sounds, and moving my way....

"I'm outta there!!!"

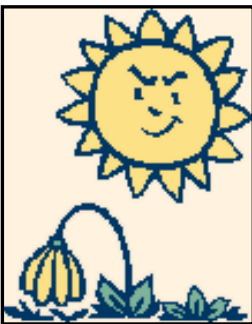
If you ever experience any Ball Lightning or any other unusual weather phenomenon, please forward your accounts, stories or pictures to Mark.Linhares@noaa.gov



The Dog Days of Summer are Coming!

By Kristina Sumrall

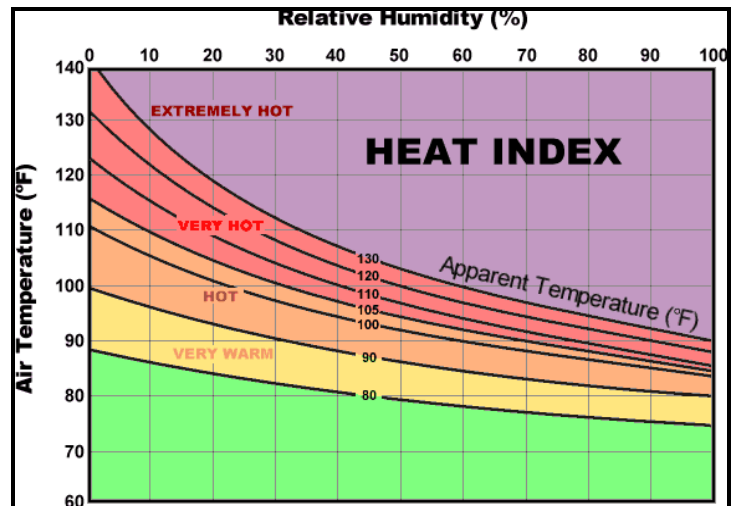
Some years it seems as if the south doesn't have much of a spring. No gradual warm-up as in other parts of the country...it just goes from cold to HOT, HOT, HOT! Add in the humidity...and you have the makings of a potentially miserable summer.



Heat Index (HI) or the "Apparent Temperature" is an accurate measure of how hot it really *feels* when the Relative Humidity (RH) is added to the actual air temperature. The National Weather Service issues several products to alert the public about excessive heat conditions.

Keep in mind that with each of the following products, the *Heat Index* must be expected to reach a certain level for 2 or more days AND the minimum temperature must be 75 degrees or greater each day.

- ◆ **Excessive Heat Advisory**- Issued when the following conditions are expected within 12 to 36 hours: **Heat Index** expected to be **110 degrees** or hotter.
- ◆ **Excessive Heat Outlook**- Issued when the following conditions are expected within 3 to 7 days: **Heat Index** expected to be **115 degrees** or hotter.



- ◆ **Excessive Heat Watch**- Issued when the following conditions are expected within 12 to 48 hours: **Heat Index** expected to be **115 degrees** or hotter.
- ◆ **Excessive Heat Warning**- Issued when the following conditions are occurring or imminent: **Heat Index** expected to be **115 degrees** or hotter.

Climate Outlook for Central Alabama

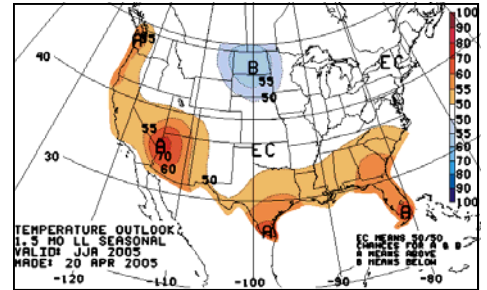
By Jim Westland

"What is the summer going to be like? Is it going to be a long hot summer, or are we expected to have a rainy and mild summer?" These are questions that are asked frequently this time of year. Unfortunately, in the world of long-term weather prediction, these questions can be difficult to answer with any degree of specificity.

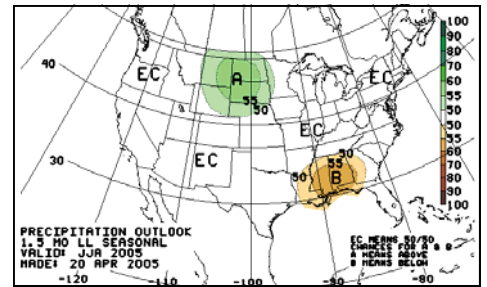
The weak El Nino that was present during the winter has continued to weaken, and conditions that are known as ENSO-neutral (no El Nino or La Nina) are expected during the upcoming summer. Interestingly, ENSO-neutral conditions in the past have been associated with summers that were warmer and drier than normal in parts of the Southeastern United States. In fact, using the El Nino forecast and several other

tools and computer models, the researchers at the Climate Prediction Center have determined that Central Alabama is more likely to experience warmer and drier conditions, compared to normal, over the course of the upcoming summer (June, July, and August).

Please keep in mind that this long term outlook represents the chances of above or below temperatures and rainfall averaged across all three summer months. There will undoubtedly be periods of both unusually mild and unusually warm weather, as well as periods of unusually wet and unusually dry conditions, throughout the summer. But taken as a whole, current forecasts indicate that this summer is expected to be warm and dry.



June July August Temperature Outlook



June July August Precipitation Outlook

On the Web By Darone Jones

In a collaborative effort between the National Weather Service, The Alabama Office of State Climatology, and The University of Alabama at Huntsville, our resident brain, Information Technology Officer Greg Machala (*the c is silent*), (a.k.a. Judge ITO) was able to reveal a project 3 years in the making. It's called the Alabama Weather Page. What it does is put gobs of unbelievable weather data at Alabamians finger tips. I basically call it, "the page no weather geek can live without."

It's got watches, it's got warnings, advisories, statements, forecasts and outlooks...all with overlays such as times, warning polygons, county/city names and even audio alerts. It also has climate data, storm data and a warning archive.

"It's got watches, it's got warnings, advisories, statements, forecasts and outlooks..."

Want to know what the temperature was at 2 pm on February 17, 2004? It's got it. How about if there was a warning on a storm that came through your county in May of 2003? If so, was there any reported damage? It's all in there. All of this is queriable in just about any way imaginable.

Did you know you can now submit your storm reports in real time? Just click

Submit Storm Reports

on the left hand side of our new webpage. The link will take you to the storm entry form where you will fill in a series of boxes that takes just a matter of minutes to do.

Enough with all of the descriptions...go see it for yourself. From the Birmingham NWS web page (www.srh.noaa.gov/bmx) click on "Enhanced Website" located just above the map. There is one thing you have to have before seeing the coolest parts of this new web page, and its free software called Java. If you don't have it, there is a link on the page so you can click to get.

Website made available through a collaborative effort from the following:



The "Brains" behind the new webpage, ITO Greg Machala.



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How many ways do you get National Weather Service information?



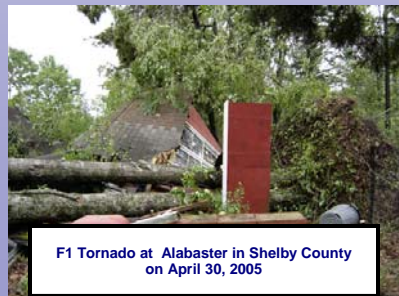
Flash Flooding in Montgomery County on March 27, 2005



Large Hail in Blount County on March 30, 2005



F0 Tornado at Jamestown in Cherokee County on April 22, 2005



F1 Tornado at Alabaster in Shelby County on April 30, 2005



Large Hail in Barbour County on March 26, 2005



Straight Line Wind Damage at Foggy Hollow in Montgomery County on April 30, 2005

Pictures of the Quarter