



(Photo of the NWS Glasgow radar with thunderstorm on the eastern horizon on June 24, 2010)

Under the Big Sky e-Letter

June 22, 2010

Amazing two weeks of severe weather: I'm sure by now that you all know of the two big events that hit Montana in recent weeks, the first being the microburst that hit near Froid, and the second being the tornado that struck Billings. The microburst near Froid was rated to have winds of 110 to 125 mph. Sadly, there was one fatality and one injury related to that event. Montana does not see many severe weather fatalities, most of ours occur in the winter with driving accidents, avalanche deaths or hypothermia. In fact, we have only 2 tornado deaths in the records, one in Wibaux County on July 19, 1952 and one in McCone County on July 9, 1983. And there have been 6 deaths from thunderstorm winds in the state. Two of the victims were killed when trees fell on them, and another two were on the same day at Tongue River Reservoir on July 16, 2008. One person was blown from the dock and drown, another had a boat capsize during the storm.

Lightning Safety Awareness Week

(June 20-26, 2010)



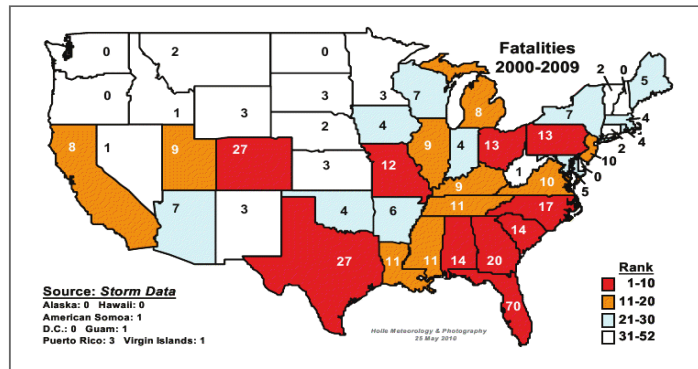
Last week was Lightning Safety Awareness Week. We've had quite a few lightning deaths in Montana in the past 20 years or so, and when you look at the graphic below, you'll see that if you rank the deaths by population, Montana is in the top 20 states!

To avoid being struck by lightning, NOAA's National Weather Service recommends that you:

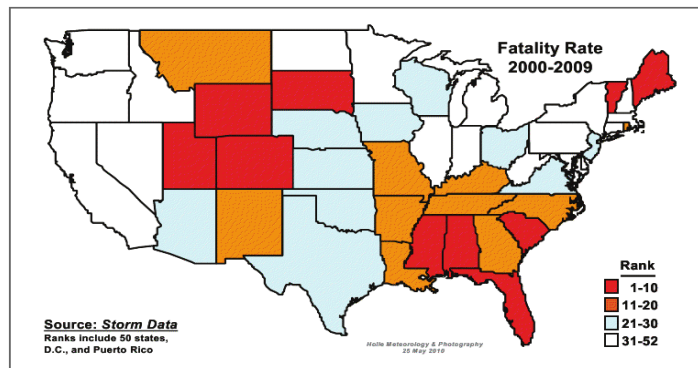
- Get into a fully enclosed building or hardtop vehicle at the first rumble of thunder;
- Stay indoors for 30 minutes after the last thunder clap;
- Monitor the weather forecast when you're planning to be outdoors;
- Have a plan for getting to safety in case a thunderstorm moves in;
- Do not use a corded phone during a thunderstorm unless it's an emergency; cell phones are safe to use;
- Keep away from plumbing, electrical equipment and wiring during a thunderstorm.



Lightning Fatalities by State, 2000-2009



Lightning Fatalities Weighted by Population by State, 2000-2009



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Updated May 2010

Experimental Graphic Local Storm Reports: This weblink below will allow you to see on a map, all of our preliminary reports or severe weather that our spotters give us. The data goes back to March 27, 2009, and you can select the portion of the country you'd like to see, and the dates you are interested in.

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sgx/kml/lsr.php?cwa=ggw&lsr>

Warning Hot Seat: Ever wonder how hard (or easy) it may be to be a forecaster during severe weather? Try the Warning Hot Seat Simulator: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ffc/?n=hotseat> The NWS office in Peachtree City (Atlanta) created this site, and has had thousands of visitors test out their skills, and learn a bit more about how to interpret the radar data before them. Try it out.

Devils Lake: 1984 vs. 2009 on NASA Satellite Imagery: I came across this recently, and thought you may find it interesting to compare the areal extent of Devils Lake, ND in 1984 to where it was last year. It's quite a difference. Over 1 Billion dollars have been spent on flood fighting/mitigation efforts in the area!

<http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=42624>

NWS Glasgow happenings:

It's been pretty busy around here with the severe weather, our meteorologist in charge leaving (we had a great going away dinner at the Fort Peck Hotel), and trying to hire a new intern. We have selected a new intern, his name is Josh Barnwell. He's a graduate of Northern Illinois University, and has almost completed his master's degree at the University of Nebraska. He's spent several weeks this summer working with the Vortex 2 tornado research project and his research focus at UN has been on snowfall (something he'll get plenty of here come winter). He'll be here at the end of August.

40 Years of Service!

We had one of our forecasters just celebrate 40 years of government service. Steven Templer was a submariner in the Navy before retiring after 28 years, going back to college, and then coming into the National Weather Service for another 12 years. Congratulations Steven for a long, fulfilling career! We're happy to have you with us! (We did celebrate with an ice cream cake too!)



Patrick Gilchrist, our Incident Meteorologist and fire weather program manager attended the Montana Eastern Fire Alliance Meeting in Sidney earlier this month. He went to brief the local fire departments on the services the NWS has to offer, and to discuss red flag warnings, and how counties decide on whether to issue burn permits or not.

Patrick and I were also involved in the Valley County/McCone County Constant Vigilance II exercise held at Fort Peck on June 9th. I participated by helping the Valley County Public Information Officer Samar Fay with mock press releases and information gathering. Patrick was there providing real time weather information since we had strong winds and rain showers moving into the area. The Montana National Guard participated as well with over 300 ground personnel and several helicopters and crew members as well. Aviation weather was a critical component to the exercise.



McCone County Deputy Paul Skyberg fully loaded with gear used in the exercise



NWS Glasgow IMET Patrick Gilchrist is monitoring storms over Phillips County that will later impact Valley County during the exercise



Petroleum County DES Coordinator Bill Cassell with his hands in the air. He was playing one of the terrorists.



A mock plane crash into the Fort Peck Hotel. A large steel dumpster served as the fire while the Fort Peck Fire Department had to go into the smoke filled building and rescue the actors rehearsing in the building. A plane even buzzed the building for effect!

Weather in the News:

Children trapped in hot cars: It's a sad occurrence, but every year there are dozens of children who are left in vehicles and die due to hyperthermia. A lot of parents forget the children are in the car, either they've fallen asleep, or their routine has been changed (ie. The parent who normally takes the child to daycare can't, and so the other parent does, but forgets to drop them off). Some sad stories include those where the parent left the child while doing a job interview because they couldn't afford daycare. For more information read the recent USA Today article at:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2010-06-25-kids-hotcars_N.htm

Or visit a website dedicated to the outreach and education of this issue at:

<http://ggweather.com/heat/index.htm>

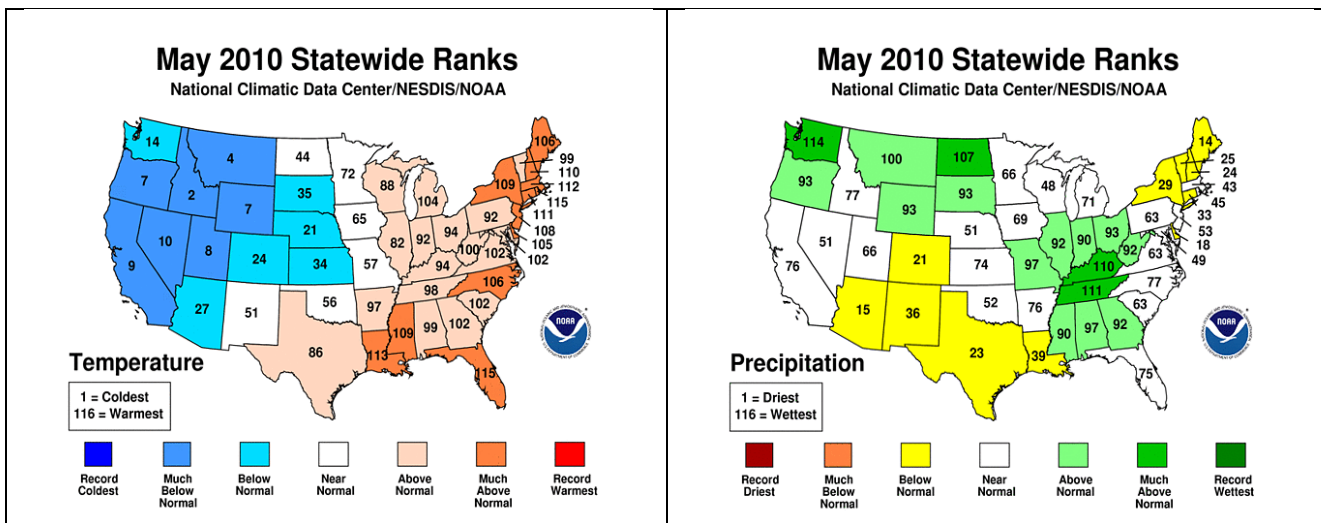
Here's an animation showing how a car warms up in the sun:

<http://ggweather.com/heat/heating-small.wmv>

May Climate Summary: May was the warmest on record Globally, although if you look at the graphics you'll see the Western US was a bit colder than normal. In fact, for Montana, May was the 4th coldest on record, while Idaho had its second coldest on record. Looking at Precipitation, Washington state had its second wettest May, Montana had its 15th wettest, and North Dakota had the 9th wettest on record.

US: http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/20100608_maystats.html

Global: http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/20100615_globalstats.html



Tribute to Mark Henckel

Many of you have probably read outdoor sporting articles that Mark wrote for the Billings Gazette. Many of you also probably already know that he passed away several weeks ago. What you may not know is his influence here in northeast Montana, and his collaborations with us at the National Weather Service. I first met him in 2003 when Andrew McKean (then at MT FWP) and I co-hosted a media day event here in Glasgow. We figured hosting an event that discussed weather, and outdoor sports would draw enough media in to make it worth their trip in. :) John Pulasky was our invited guest speaker on the weather side, and Mark was our outdoor sports invited guest speaker.



Mark Henckel with his Weather Chicken at the Fort Peck Hotel

Mark kept us entertained that evening, not just with outdoor sporting adventures, but weather stories. You can see he even brought out his weather chicken to share with us \$29.95, what a deal! I don't remember all the humor he quoted that night, but I do remember laughing to the point I was in tears.

He was also there to help us when we were considering whether or not the wind criteria for Fort Peck Lake were adequate for boaters. He created surveys that went on the Walleye's Unlimited and Pikemasters website. Through that input, we were able to redo the lake wind advisory criteria and make it something useful to those recreating on Fort Peck Lake.

But, the work didn't end there. He was a huge proponent of getting weather cameras on Montana lakes. The Fort Peck Dam Cam was the first camera we (NWS Glasgow) did with Mark, and it wouldn't have gotten done as smoothly without him. He also had the original cam at the Hell Creek Marina, and they have been invaluable to us in use for forecasting. He spent a lot of his time maintaining some of the cameras out there, and those efforts were much appreciated by the NWS, and I'm sure by many of you!

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/ggw/fortpeck.php>

Anytime I emailed or called him, he was more than willing to help. We'll miss you Mark! You were someone we could count on!