

# The Role of a Weather Watcher

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What is a Weather Watcher?

A weather watcher is a trained individual that understands how to use basic weather information and monitors the weather forecast and current conditions. The purpose of the weather watcher is to maintain situational awareness of the weather and activate the event's weather safety plan if needed. By monitoring weather conditions, the designated weather watcher allows everyone else to focus on the business at hand.

Because of the time and logistics required to shelter people who are unfamiliar with the event's plan, the designated weather watcher is particularly critical to special events that as ARES members we are likely to participate in.

It is important that the role of the designated weather watcher is always filled. In other words, the responsibility is best tasked to a position, rather than an individual who might or might not be there when the hazard strikes. It doesn't matter as much who it is, as long as everyone knows they carry the responsibility for monitoring conditions and alerting those that will "make the call".

The Weather Watcher process should begin three days before the event begins. The weather watcher should:

- Understand event-specific weather-related thresholds and evacuation/sheltering time
- Have reliable internet access
- Have access to up-to-date radar information
- Maintain continuous weather watch on event day (best practice is that they not be designated for any other responsibilities)
- Communicate directly with incident command staff, especially when a hazardous weather threshold is expected to be met
- Have access to NWSChat. This can be accessed without an NWSChat account at [weather.im/iembot](https://weather.im/iembot) on a mobile device

The Weather Watcher Checklist will guide the weather watcher through key forecast and monitoring information available to assess weather hazards. I followed links from the NWS to try to find such a page on our local Austin/San Antonio NWS station, but failed to find it. I did, however, find it at the Chicago NWS site and it is quite helpful.

The Days Leading up to the Event section should be followed each day leading up to the event. This allows the weather watcher to develop a general understanding of potential weather hazards

The Day of Event section should be utilized early on the day of the event to assess in detail the potential for weather hazards.

The During Event section lists information that should be monitored throughout the day of the event to assess how hazards are evolving. This will aid in determining when hazards will impact the event.

I discovered many data on the NWS sites that I had no idea where there. In particular, I found the Point Forecast tool that identifies on an hourly basis all the pertinent weather factors for a 1.5 mile by 1.5 mile square over the last two days and for two days in the future. The graphical interface connected with this data is super helpful.

For instance: tonight we may be treated to a spectacular meteor shower over our area. The earth will pass through the tail of the tau Herculids comet at about 23:00 local time tonight. From the NWS data I learned that the cloud cover over my home at that time is forecast to be at its lowest coverage of the day. It is possible that the meteor shower will not occur, but if it does it will be spectacular!

Lastly, today is of course Memorial Day, 2022. For over 150 years Americans have set aside a special day to honor our military service members who made the supreme sacrifice in service to our country.

Thanks be to God for gathering the men in Philadelphia in 1787 to form the most perfect form of government yet known to man. And thanks also be to God for providing so many souls willing to do whatever is necessary to defend our country in the most desperate of times. God Bless America!