

STEARNS COUNTY SKYWARN POLICIES & PROCEDURES

1. Mission Statement

The mission of Stearns County Skywarn is to provide weather spotting services to accurately identify and relay timely weather related information to Stearns County Emergency Management and the National Weather Service.

2. Goal

Recruit and train residents of Stearns County to become Skywarn Weather Spotters to assist Emergency Management, the National Weather Service and other public safety agencies during severe weather events. Skywarn members will provide weather conditions through Net Control to aid Emergency Management in actions to be taken to warn the public.

3. What is Skywarn?

Skywarn is the National Weather Service (NWS) program of trained volunteer severe weather spotters. Skywarn Spotters support their local community and government by providing the NWS and their local emergency managers with timely and accurate severe weather reports. These reports, when integrated with modern NWS technology, are used to inform communities of the proper actions to take as severe weather threatens.

4. Skywarn Spotter Membership

Membership in the Stearns County Skywarn Program is open to anyone 18 years and older.

Requirements for membership include the following:

- Training at least once every other year (certificate must be provided)
- Application for membership MUST be submitted no later than April 1 on an annual basis
- Current amateur radio license OR
 - If you do not possess an amateur radio license you MUST be paired with a current Stearns County Skywarn Spotter who is a licensed amateur radio operator
- All first year members or members with no Stearns County activation experience must be paired with a current Skywarn member for one storm season
 - New members with previous Skywarn experience may apply for a waiver from the one year requirement after a probationary period
- Attend monthly Skywarn meetings (minimum attendance 3 out of 5 meetings)
- Participate in 1/5th of all Skywarn activations for the year
- All members of Net Control must complete a background check (screening criteria established by the Stearns County Sheriff's Office)
- Members of Net Control must complete 800 MHz radio training on an annual basis

Skywarn members who do not meet the requirements for membership as stated above will be in a probationary status. Stearns County Emergency Management reserves the right to decline membership for members that do not adhere to program policies.

5. Severe Weather Spotting

Stearns County Skywarn Weather Spotters who have been activated must check-in with Net Control. Upon check-in spotters will receive direction to an assigned location, by the Net Control Operator. Spotters should proceed to the assigned location and report arrival at destination to Net Control. Remain at assigned location until otherwise directed by Net Control (in the event that you feel unsafe at your location because of impending weather please take shelter immediately and inform Net Control of your actions). If you stop for gas or to leave your vehicle please communicate your temporary absence with Net Control.

If Skywarn members wish to move to another location, check-in with Net Control for potential re-assignment.

If you need to check-out and no longer participate in the activation make sure you communicate with Net Control that you are standing down. Prior to the Net closing the Net Control Operator will complete a check-out procedure.

6. Hours of Activation

Stearns County Skywarn will ONLY activate during daylight hours.

7. Activating the Skywarn Net

Stearns County Net Control members, Stearns County Emergency Management and the Stearns County Sheriff's Office are the only personnel authorized to activate the Skywarn Net. Activation will be done through the Everbridge Notification System.

Stearns County Net Control may activate the Net if there is: 1. A severe thunderstorm or tornado warning has been issued by the National Weather Service for Stearns County. 2. Severe weather in any adjacent county that will impact Stearns County. 3. If a weather watch has been issued by the National Weather Service for Stearns County and developing weather in our county or an adjacent county is likely to become severe. Stearns County Skywarn may choose to formally activate without a warning having been issued, under the following circumstances:

1. The NWS has issued a Severe Weather Statement or Special Weather Statement that demonstrates a potential serious threat.
2. Confirmed observations by a Skywarn Spotter or a public safety official indicate seriously deteriorating weather conditions.
3. Stearns County Emergency Management officials specifically request activation.
4. No warning may have been issued specifically for Stearns County, but the NWS has requested activation based on the potential.

On rare occasions the NWS may ask Stearns County Net Control to remain activated, even though the threat of severe weather has passed, to forward severe weather information from another county to the NWS. The determination to honor such a request is at the discretion of Net Control.

8. Skywarn Committee

The Skywarn Committee is the governing body of the Stearns County Skywarn program. It will be made up of eight members of the Skywarn organization. The Skywarn Committee will meet monthly on the first Wednesday of the month. Minutes of the meeting will be taken. A majority of the Skywarn Committee meeting shall constitute a quorum.

The committee will elect a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. These will be one year terms.

9. Election of Committee Members

Each Skywarn committee member shall be elected to a two-year term of office. Elections for new committee members will be held at the Skywarn Organizational meeting every September. The Stearns County Emergency Management Director will solicit members for a nominating committee. The Nominating Committee will recommend members for election each year. Additional nominations will be solicited from the floor at the time of the elections. Half the members of the Committee would be elected each year. In the event of a vacancy on the Skywarn Committee, the Stearns County Emergency Management Director will appoint a member to fulfill the remaining term of the member replaced.

10. Rules and Regulations

Stearns County Skywarn Weather Spotters are to adhere to the rules and regulations hereby stated:

1. Must be in possession of:
 - Automobile insurance and carry current insurance card in vehicle
 - Current Driver's License
2. Flashing lights (of any color) that are added to a vehicle are prohibited for use by Stearns County Skywarn members while in service for the County.

Failure to follow these policy rules may result in dismissal from the Stearns County Skywarn Organization.