



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HAM RADIO OPERATORS PREPARE FOR SEVERE WEATHER SEASON ARES 2014-01

Having shaken off a bitterly cold winter, most Manitobans are looking forward to spring, But spring also brings with it severe weather in the form of thunderstorms, hail and even tornadoes to the prairies.

On March 22nd, more than thirty Amateur Radio Operators (also known as “Hams”) will gather in Morris to receive Severe Weather Spotter training from Environment Canada Warning Preparedness Meteorologist Natalie Hasell (who is herself a Ham with callsign VE4NAT) and training in CANWARN Net Protocols from Manitoba ARES District Emergency Coordinator Jeff Dovyak (VE4MBQ). The Severe Weather Spotters are part of the CANWARN (**Canadian Weather Amateur Radio Network**) program run by the **Radio Amateurs of Canada - Amateur Radio Emergency Service** and **Environment Canada**.

There are currently 150 such spotters in the Province in 40 different communities. Every year they are activated an average of ten times a year to report weather conditions to the Environment Canada, mostly during the Severe Weather “Season” between June and early August. When activated, the CANWARN Spotters report back with their radio equipment to the Amateur Radio Station VE4WWO in the Prairie & Arctic Storm Prediction Centre in Winnipeg.

“CANWARN Spotters are able to provide Severe Weather Forecasters with the ground truth of what is actually happening in a particular area as opposed to what instrumentation may only be suggesting” says Jeff Dovyak the Emergency Coordinator for Manitoba and coordinator of the spotter training.

This on-site visual reporting is essential for the Weather Office to be able to issue timely warnings of events like Tornadoes. In fact it was CANWARN spotters who were onsite reporting the F5 Tornado in Elie in 2007.

Members of the public who need to report severe weather are asked to call (800)-239-0484.

CANWARN is just one of the many Community Services that Amateur Radio Operators provide including providing communications support during flood season to both the City of Winnipeg and Province of Manitoba. In fact Amateur Radio Operators were specifically exempted from the recent charges to the Highway Traffic Act restricting the use of hand-operated electronic devices while driving.
