



# THE ATMOSPHERIC RESERVOIR

*Examining the Atmosphere and Atmospheric Resource Management*

## Let's Get Ready to Rumble

By Darin Langerud

No, I'm not talking about Ali-Frazier or Tyson-Holyfield, but a different type of rumble familiar on the Great Plains. After a long winter of blowing snow and cold, Mother Nature has a different kind of rumble in store – one that may accompany severe summer weather. Spring is finally here and the likelihood of hearing the familiar rumble of thunder rises along with the temperature. Summer's longer and warmer days help provide the energy the atmosphere needs to create thunderstorms that can tower ten miles into the sky.

While thunderstorms are awesome to watch, they are a double-edged sword, producing the majority of growing season precipitation in North Dakota, but also bringing severe weather which may include lightning, hail, floods, high winds, or even tornadoes.

There are a number of things you can do to protect yourself and your property from severe summer weather. The first, and probably most important, boils down to one thing: awareness. Everyone is familiar with the watches and warnings that are issued in advance of severe weather. A Watch means conditions are favorable for the development of severe weather in the affected area. Severe Thunderstorm and Tornado watches are typically issued prior to the onset of severe weather and prescribe the geographic area where the storms are expected to occur. A Warning means



Photo: Daniel Brothers, ARB

that severe weather is occurring and those in its path should take appropriate precautions immediately. Warnings are issued by your local National Weather Service offices in Bismarck and Grand Forks and are typically issued for specific counties and locales.

A good way to monitor the potential or occurrence of severe weather is with a NOAA Weather Radio. These commercially-available radios tune into the NOAA Weather Radio network, providing severe weather watches, warnings, and general weather information 24-hours a day. Most importantly, the radios automatically alert you, day or night, if severe weather is threatening your area.

Severe weather safety is mostly just common sense. Simple things like parking your car in the garage and taking shelter inside a sturdy building will protect you and your property from most severe weather situations. When strong winds or hail are involved, stay away from windows, as broken glass can cause significant injuries. The most effective protection from lightning is inside a building or vehicle. If caught outside, squat down on your feet, to

make yourself as small as possible. You don't want to be the tallest object in the area, but on the other hand, don't take shelter under a tall tree; if it is struck, you may be as well.

Flooding takes many unsuspecting drivers for a wild ride every year. Never drive through flooded areas, especially fast moving water, as

your vehicle could be swept away. A flooded road may also hide the fact that it's structurally unsafe, or washed out entirely.

The most spectacular phenomenon spawned by thunderstorms is the tornado. North Dakota averages 22 reported tornadoes per year, but that number has ranged from as little as two to as many as 61 in 1999. If faced with a tornado, take shelter in a small interior room on the lowest level of a sturdy building. Abandon mobile homes and automobiles for more substantial shelter as they provide very little, if any protection. If you are caught outside, lie down in a ditch or depression and cover your head.

Being aware of potential hazardous weather conditions and taking appropriate action will help keep you safe from the storm. Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

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