

Radio Operations of the Houston/Galveston NWS Office

The SKYWARN operations for the Houston/Galveston area are based at the Houston/Galveston NWS office at FM 646. The actual radio room is on the second floor and is shared by both SKYWARN and the Galveston County Emergency Communications Group, or GCECG. The main SKYWARN transceiver is a Yaesu FT-8800R, which operates on the 2 meter and 70 centimeter bands. Although SKYWARN uses the Saltgrass system as the primary means of communications, most of the local repeaters can be accessed via the SKYWARN radio. SKYWARN can also use the HF radio that is also installed in the radio room. HF operations are not normally used for SKYWARN, but communications with the State Operations Center (SOC) and the National Hurricane Center would be performed via HF in the event of a hurricane threat. This capability was tested during the 2007 Hurricane Drill where we were able to establish communications with the City of Austin using the day ARES HF frequency of 7.285MHz.

Since the SKYWARN radio room is next to the NWS operations room, the person at the radio can be in direct contact with NWS staff for incoming SKYWARN reports and the present weather situation. The actual weather warnings are relayed to the radio room by the EMWIN -- Emergency Managers Weather Information Network. The weather consoles used by the meteorologists are also visible by the SKYWARN operator.

The NWS has an open house each year as part of the SKYWARN Appreciation Day which is held on the first Saturday in December.