

Radio operators plan training

Special to the Avalanche

The Big Bend Amateur Radio Club will host SKYWARN training by the National Weather Service at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 31.

The training will be conducted by the NWS Midland office in Room 201 of the Warnock Science Building on the Sul Ross campus. The public is invited, and there is no charge.

Amateur radio has remained an important part of the National Weather Service mission for many years. Without amateur radio operators spotting storms in the field, the Weather Service is often faced with using information obtained solely by instrumentation.

SKYWARN is a concept developed in the early 1970s to promote a cooperative effort between the National Weather Service and communities. The effort is often focused on the storm spotter, an individual who takes a position near his/her community and reports wind gusts, hail size, rainfall and cloud formations that could signal a developing tornado.

The organization of spotters and the distribution of warning information lies with the NWS or with an emergency management agency within the community. This agency could be a police or fire department, or often is an emergency management/service group. This varies across the country, with local NWS offices taking the lead in some locations, while emergency management takes the lead in other areas.

SKYWARN spotters are not by definition "storm chasers." While their functions and methods are similar, the spotter stays close to home and usually has ties to a local agency. Storm chasers often cover hundreds of miles a day. Storm spotting and storm chasing is dangerous and should not be done without proper training, experience and equipment.

For more information about the SKYWARN training, call Bob Ward, WA5ROE, at 432-837-2061.