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Public event covering extreme weather, 'new normals' Saturday

By CAROLINE EGGERS ceggers@bgdailynews.com 2 hrs ago

A wall cloud portends extreme weather.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Tornado chasers, thunderstorm spotters and weather enthusiasts have the chance to meet some of Kentucky's top weather experts this Saturday for the KenTenn Weather Workshop at Western Kentucky University's Topper Club.

From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., meteorologists, scientists, emergency management officials and other weather experts will cover topics ranging from flood risk awareness and drone uses in natural disasters and emergencies to the basics of winter weather forecasting and Kentucky's changing climate.

Kentucky Mesonet manager Megan Schargorodski will share highlights from more than a decade of statewide data.

Since 2007, the established Kentucky Mesonet network has recorded some pretty extreme weather – the hottest temperature, for example, was recorded at 107.8 degrees in Hopkins County in 2010.

“It’s hard to remember some of these extremes,” Schargorodski said. “I want to highlight the highest of the high and lowest of the low to demonstrate how dynamic the network can be.”

“Everybody wants to know if the current weather we’re seeing is normal ... but these normals change.”

As the world has warmed, average climate conditions have changed. This has brought more frequent and intense extreme weather and climate-related events that impact infrastructure, ecosystems and social systems, according to the Fourth National Climate Assessment.

Mary Lamm, service hydrologist with the National Weather Service Paducah Office, will discuss Kentucky’s “new normals.”

When discussing weather, it’s common to hear departures from normal, which actually refers to the 30-year climatological average. In 2021, this “normal” will be updated to reflect data from 1991 through 2020.

In Kentucky, the “new norm” has been increased rainfall amounts and increased incidences of flooding, according to Lamm.

“People need to be aware of increased incidences of flooding, whether for mitigation, planning or emergency management practices,” Lamm said, and “communities all across the state need to be a bit more

prepared.”

Later, Dr. David Oliver, director of Environmental Health and Safety and the emergency manager for WKU, will educate folks about the benefits of obtaining credentials in emergency management.

“It’s important for folks from a lot of different disciplines to understand the concepts of emergency management and instant command,” Oliver said, and official training helps people understand the various risks, planning procedures and response measures.

Annually, weather disasters kill about 90,000 people and affect nearly 160 million people worldwide, according to the World Health Organization.

In the U.S., weather-related deaths have been increasing in recent years, from 557 deaths in 2014 to 787 deaths in 2018, according to the National Safety Council.

“Weather has been the biggest overall threat, when you really get down to it,” Oliver said. “It’s important for people to recognize that we need to prepare for all hazards.”

This year, the presentations will be held in the same room sequentially so people wouldn’t have to decide which to attend, according to Lamm.

“They had a hard time narrowing the topics for the workshop,” Lamm said, but “everyone gets to hear everything.”

– *For more information and to register for the workshop, visit weather.gov/lmk/kentenn.*

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