

LAKE COUNTY SKYWARN  
SEVERE WEATHER OUTLOOK  
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*I've had questions lately asking what some of the terms and discussions mean when we issue our Severe Weather Outlooks. Well, good news. I have finally been able to sit down and give you an overview of what the heck we are talking about. Here is a glossary of terms and their meaning.*

*- Bruce Becker*

HIGH RESOLUTION – Less distance between data points (e.g. 8 kilometers apart)

LOW RESOLUTION – More distance between data points (e.g. 40 kilometers apart)

BOW ECHO – A line of t-storms where the center portion of the line moves faster than the ends of the line (“bows”). The bowing portions can be responsible, in some cases, for hurricane force winds.

DERECHO – A long line of t-storms that produces widespread damaging winds.

NAM – (North American Model) A numerical weather prediction computer model.

GFS – (Global Forecast System) A numerical weather prediction computer model.

HPC – Hydrometeorological Prediction Center (<http://www.hpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>)

SPC – Storm Prediction Center (<http://www.spc.noaa.gov/>)

LCS – Lake County SKYWARN

LOW – An area of low pressure in which winds rotate counterclockwise and toward the center.

HIGH – An area of high pressure in which winds rotate clockwise and out from the center.

TROUGH – An area of lower pressure that occurs at the surface which has not formed a center of circulation. Winds are from the south on the east side and north on the west side.

UPPER LEVEL TROUGH – An area of lower pressure that occurs in the upper atmosphere that has not formed a center of circulation. Winds are from the south on the east side and north on the west side.

**RIDGE** – An area of higher pressure that occurs at the surface which has not formed a center of circulation. Winds are from the north on the east side and south on the west side.

**UPPER LEVEL RIDGE** – An area of higher pressure that occurs in the upper atmosphere that has not formed a center of circulation. Winds are from the north on the east side and south on the west side.

**POSITIVELY TILTED TROUGH** – A trough which is tilted from the northeast to the southwest. These troughs are of a weaker nature. Winds on the east side are more S and SW and more N and NE on the west side.

**NEGATIVELY TILTED TROUGH** – A trough which is tilted from northwest to southeast. These troughs are of a stronger nature. Winds on the east side are more S and SE and more N and NW on the west side.

**JET STREAM** – A band of strong winds in the upper atmosphere generally located from 28,000 to 40,000 feet. Named in the 1930's after the altitudes where jet airliners fly.

**BUFKIT** – Software which displays numerical weather prediction computer model output as a cross section of the atmosphere from the surface to around 75,000 feet.

**CAP** – An area in the atmosphere in which a parcel of warm air from the surface stops rising.

**RAINFALL GUIDANCE** – An estimate used by Lake County SKYWARN in which expected rainfall amounts are 60% likely.

**SEVERE WEATHER PROBABILITIES** – The percentage chance that a severe weather event will occur within 25 miles of a given point.

**SEVERE WEATHER** – Thunderstorm wind gusts of 58 MPH or greater, hail of 1" in diameter or greater and EF0-EF1 tornadoes.

**SIGNIFICANT SEVERE WEATHER** – Thunderstorm wind gusts of 74 MPH or greater, hail of 2" in diameter or greater and EF2-EF5 tornadoes.

**EF SCALE** – A scale used to grade tornado intensity based on damage.

**WX** – Abbreviation for "weather."

**WALL CLOUD** – A lowered cloud base at the rear portion of a t-storm which may be rotating. This is the area where tornadoes form.

**MICROBURST** – A strong downdraft associated with a t-storm which strikes the ground and spreads out. Winds in some cases can be as strong as an EF2 tornado (125 MPH).

**STRAIGHT LINE WINDS** – Strong thunderstorm outflow winds which occur immediately ahead of a storm's arrival. These winds can reach 90 MPH.

**REAR FLANK DOWNDRAFT (RFD)** – Strong thunderstorm outflow winds which occur at the rear of a thunderstorm. These winds can reach 100 MPH.