

# 2007 Spring Storm Chase Log

(Participants: Dylan Frey, Ryan Wunder, & Mike Daly)

**Day 1 (5/17):** Upon reaching the airport at 9:30am we proceeded to the US Airways check-in station. After several failed attempts by the computer to pull our itinerary it was evident that something had changed. Indeed, the flight coming into Rochester was late, and if we waited for that plane then we would miss our connecting flight in Philadelphia. So we were re-routed through Reagan International Airport in Washington DC on a flight that left about the same time and had a connecting flight to Chicago that arrived a few minutes earlier, but on a United Airways plane. Doing a quick calculation, we quickly realized that we would only have about a 30 minute lay-over in Reagan, so we would have to boogie to the next flight. After landing, we unloaded the plane onto a bus, took a short ride to the terminal, unloaded the bus, and then everyone was re-routed through the full security check! Needless to say, we were now running late. As we approached the terminal for our connecting flight, the attendant was shouting and asking if we were from Rochester, then said to hurry to the ramp door for they were holding the flight for us! Phew, just made it!!

Once in Chicago, we ran into the next speed bump: Ryan's bag didn't make it! So we filed a claim and were told it was coming in on the next flight at 4:30 and they would deliver it for us. We rendezvoused with Professor Karl Schulze and headed over to the COD campus to pick up the T-shirts. Since we didn't have time to eat anything all day we were starving, so we headed to a great Chicago pizza restaurant and ingested some tasty Chicago style deep dish pizza. Man was that good! After dinner we headed over to the COD lab so Karl could administer a final exam, while we caught up on email, web surfing, and a trial game of Risk. Around 10pm we finally crashed at Karl's place. Unfortunately, Ryan's bag had not shown up yet and we hadn't received a call from the airline either, so we hopped online to see what the deal was. That's when we read that his bag had gotten lost and was on 'high priority' for the airlines to find. We called it a night, got settled and it was 'lights out' sometime after midnight.

**Day 2 (5/18):** After getting up and around, our first task was to hit a Walmart so Ryan could get some 'essentials' and Mike could locate a wireless WiFi card for his laptop. On our way to Wally World we stopped for gas, where it was \$3.53/gallon. Other places we saw later were in the \$3.80's!! Ryan got his essentials, Mike picked up the wireless card, and I found the best tasting beef jerky ever! Jack Links Premium Cuts with A1 steak sauce flavor. It's like eating steak!! Anyway, after returning to Karl's, Mike quickly realized the card he had gotten didn't fit his laptop, so a return trip Wally World was needed. We returned the card and walked next door where there was a Circuit City. Mike got a USB wireless device and we were on our way back to Karl's.

After getting lunch at a local restaurant, we were off to downtown Chicago with Karl & his family. We took 2 cars, so I was lucky enough to experience driving within the craziness that is Chicago traffic. We walked around downtown Chicago for a couple hours taking in the scenery and snapping pictures. A little after 3pm we headed back to try to beat the rush hour traffic, however it was still stop-n-go for much of the way and,

although it only took about 30 minutes to get to the city, it took over an hour and a half to get back! That is one commute I would never want to have!! Luckily on the way back Ryan received a call from the airlines that they had recovered his back and were delivering it later in the evening. Ryan was very relieved!!

We then grabbed some McDonalds to go and headed over to the COD lab for our orientation class with the other participants on the trip. While Mike, Ryan, and Dylan were getting 'oriented', I was brought up to speed with the latest technologies and improvements in the vans, and refreshed on my responsibilities as the Assistant for the trip. Once the orientation class was over, we went back to Karl's to get some sleep before our first day on the road tomorrow.

**Day 3 (5/19):** The alarm went off at 5:15am and our day began. We took our showers and got everything packed up before heading up the road to Granny's Restaurant for breakfast. It was very good as usual and the fresh-squeezed orange juice topped it off nicely. When we returned to Karl's place we were greeted with the van ready to take us over to the college to meet everyone else. Once there, we packed the vans, had our morning weather briefing, hit the bathrooms, then we were off at 8:30am on the beginning of our adventure!

Today is just a driving day to get into position for tomorrow's chase, likely in western South Dakota. So we decided that it would be a nice time to get through the required videos (work for class) while we drive to help pass the time and get them behind us. After stopping at the largest truck stop in the world (as the sign proclaimed) in Walcott, Iowa and getting lunch, we continued on our trek towards South Dakota. During a masquerade of Indian Poker games (playing for Sprees and M&M's), we were on Rt. 35 northbound just before the border (west of Northwood) when we witnessed an impressive dust devil spin up just off the right hand side of the road right in front of the van!! Due to its close proximity to the van, no one had time to snap any pictures or video, but it sure sparked excitement amongst everyone!

After grabbing dinner in Blue Earth, storms began to fire along an east-west boundary just to our north. However, since the flow was very weak in our vicinity the storms were likely to remain "mooshballs", or ordinary, non-severe t-storms. So we continued heading west on I-90 and grazed several of the cores. We saw some good lightning bolts, along with some storm structure, rain curtains/shafts, and a double rainbow. While the storms were not severe by any means, it was good to see them on the first day!

We arrived at the Days Inn in Murdo, SD to stay the night at 10pm. We will be getting up around 8am, with a morning weather briefing and map analysis party at 10am.

**Day 4 (5/20):** After a couple hours of analyzing the current weather model runs, we had to make a decision: Chase in Montana today and travel south tomorrow without the possibility to chase, or head south today (blow off Montana) and chase the southern plains tomorrow. Since Montana was a marginal day and the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma looked more promising for tomorrow, we packed up and began our trek southward. We finally landed in Liberal, Kansas where we enjoyed the pool and Jacuzzi before calling it a night. Things look good for tomorrow's chase, but even better for Tuesday with the preliminary outlook of a possible tornadic outbreak.

**Day 5 (5/21):** To start the day we all met in one of the hotel rooms where the morning weather briefing commenced. The previous day's outlook was still holding, so we packed up and headed towards Amarillo, TX at 9:30am. We reached Amarillo a little after noon and got lunch. However, van #2 had sprung a diesel leak earlier in the trip and had been progressively getting worse with time, and now it was leaking enough to cover the bottom of the van. So while most of the group sat and watched the skies, Karl and Ryan (driver for van 2) took the van to the nearest Dodge dealership to get it looked at and hopefully fixed. After lunch we came out to van 1 to see what was happening and we could see towering cumulus clouds off to our NW. By the time we got the radar up a storm had fired where the cumulus towers were pulsing. Radar confirmed the storm and it was located in NE New Mexico, about 80 miles away. But we had to wait for the status of Karl and van 1 before we could move. So we sat and watched as storms began to fire to our west and NW, but luckily they were not very organized.

We finally got word from Karl that the dealership would not have the part until tomorrow for the van, and that he would be bringing back a rental. At 3pm we headed east out of Amarillo to get closer to the dry-line, which had moved eastward while we were waiting. Then it was a waiting game, watching small storms try to fire and then slowly die off. By 5pm it appeared as though the storms south of the main convection to our north had little chance of becoming anything, so we headed NE to intercept the large convective squallline that had developed. **The cell we intercepted had 1" hail reported and 65 mph winds and was located just north of Pampa, TX.** The lightning show that followed was amazing and was backlit by the gorgeous sunset. We stopped for dinner at the Big Texas Steak Ranch, where they host a contest to see who can eat a 72oz steak, shrimp cocktail, baked potato, salad, and an jalapeño pepper all in under an hour. If that is accomplished, the meal is free. Needless to say, none of us tried it...this time. However, we did want to try the rattlesnake, but they were all sold out. Bummer!! We got back to the hotel in Amarillo, TX around 11:30PM and it was lights out at 12:30.

Tomorrow looks to be a banner day up in Kansas, so we have our fingers crossed that we'll encounter the tornado we're after!

**Day 6 (5/22):**

**Day 7 (5/23):**

**Day 8 (5/24):**

**Day 9 (5/25):**

**Day 10 (5/26):**

**Day 11 (5/27):**

**Day 12 (5/28):**

**Day 13 (5/29):**

