Warning Methodology

Screen, Rank, Analyze, Decide (SRAD)

1. **<u>Screen</u>** the storms that threaten life and property over your CWA.

   - <u>Severe Hazards (tornado/wind/hail)</u>: Load a 4-panel display showing a 60-minute loop of MRMS': Reflectivity at Lowest Altitude, Maximum Estimated Size of Hail (MESH) and 60-min MESH Tracks, 60-min 0-2 km Rotation Tracks, and Vertically Integrated Ice *(Note: An alternative could be a single-site lowest-tilt, Base Reflectivity, 60 minute time lapse loop with algorithm overlays. Use this alternative display if the MRMS products are experiencing latency.)*

2. Identify the highest **<u>Rank</u>**ed storm. Factors to consider include:

   - Near-storm environment
   - Storm reports
   - Rapidly-intensifying storms
   - Deviant motion (i.e., right-mover, left-mover)
   - Convective mode (ordinary cell, multicell, supercell, derecho, etc.)
   - Maximum Expected Size of Hail (MESH) value
   - Azimuthal shear / Rotation Tracks values
   - Signatures: Inflow notch, three-body scatter spike (TBSS), hook echo, Tornado Debris Signature (TDS), rear inflow jet (RIJ) etc.
   - Societal / population considerations
   - Storms which are under-warned or have a warning that's due to expire soon (<10 min)

   Go to Step 4 to immediately issue a warning for your highest ranked storm if:

   - It exhibits a high confidence severe signature (e.g., TDS) and/or it has a high confidence report, and
   - It's unwarned, under warned, or has a warning set to expire in less than 5 minutes.

   Otherwise, go to step 3.

3. **<u>Analyze</u>** the highest ranked storm's structure and hazards.

   - Use the "All Hazards Decision Chart" as a quick reference.
   - Use the Warning Decision Cycle checklists as detailed reference.
     - Updraft Strength
     - Tornado
     - Severe Hail
     - Severe Wind

4. Make your **<u>Decision</u>**. Consider the following factors when determining motion, duration, polygon orientation, and wording:

   - Tornado
     - Choose WarnGen Track type: "One Storm" and track the low-level vortex, but regard the parent storm's motion.
     - Be sure to account for possible mesocyclone occlusion(s) and motion uncertainty in your polygon (don't try to be too precise).

    - Capture multiple threats in close proximity with a single polygon when necessary.
    - **Avoid:**
        - "Tornado Emergency" wording unless there is very high confidence of a significant (EF2+) tornado moving into an urban area.
    - Non-mesocyclonic: Track the updraft interaction with the low-level boundary(ies).

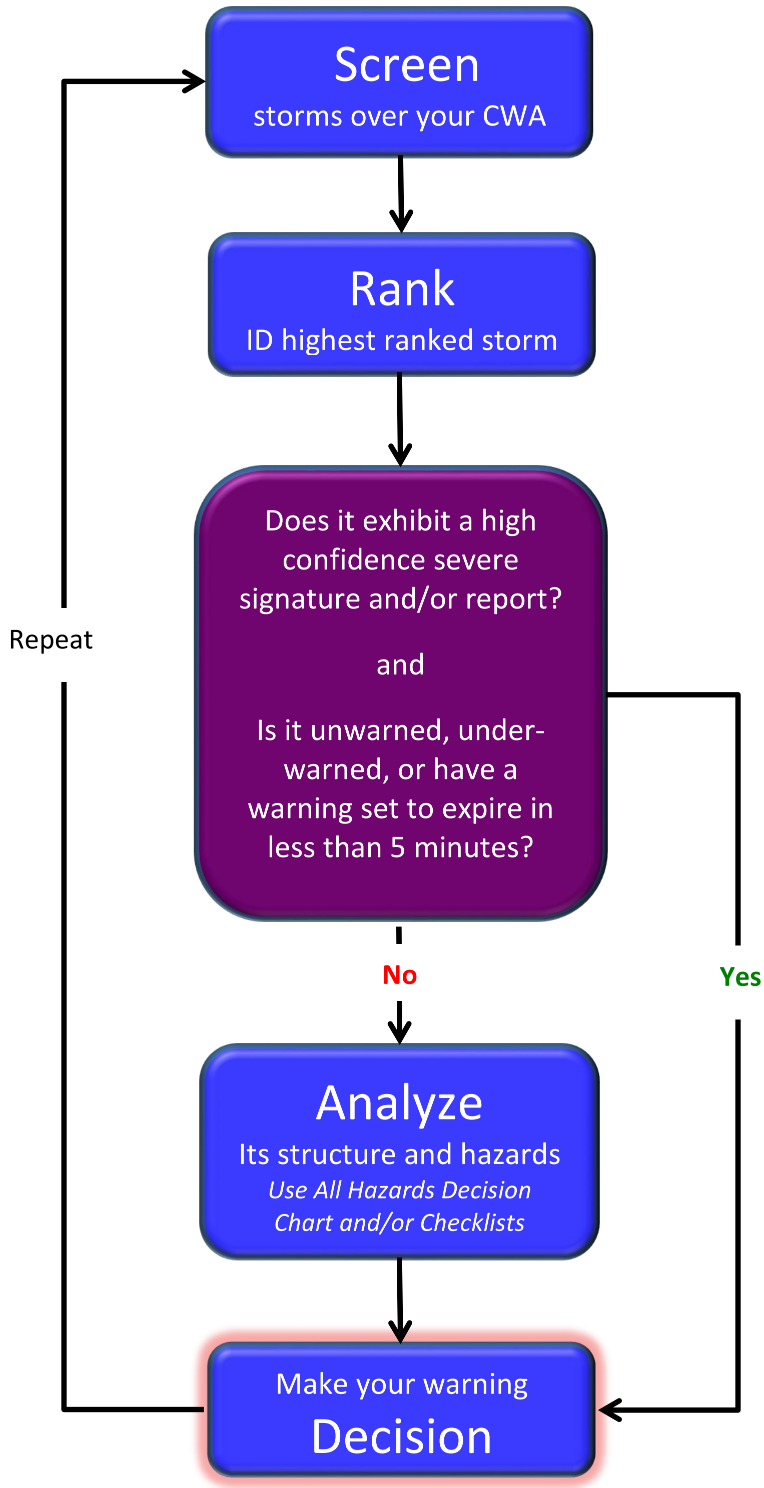
- Severe Hail/Wind
    - <u>Individual cell</u>: Choose WarnGen Track type: "One Storm" and track the updraft/downdraft interface region; be sure to include both the updraft and downdraft regions in your polygon.
        - <u>Supercell</u>: Anticipate deviant motion; include the Rear Flank Downdraft (RFD) in your polygon.
    - <u>Multicell</u>: Choose WarnGen Track type: "One Storm" and track the area where cells mature; ensure polygon includes existing severe threat as well as anticipates new cell development.
        - <u>Bow Echo/QLCS</u>: Choose WarnGen Track type: "Line of Storms" and track the gust front; include trailing severe winds and hail in your polygon.

NOTE: One SRAD cycle (steps 1-4) should take about 5 minutes (with experience).

5. Repeat the SRAD process until no new warnings are required.

WDTD Suggested Warning Methodology:

Screen, Rank, Analyze, Decision (SRAD)



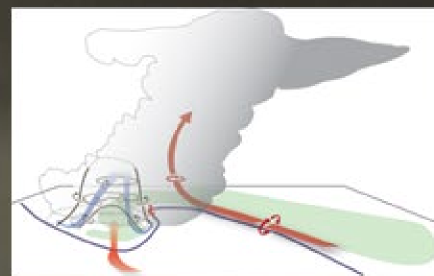
Tornado

Near Storm Environment	Storm Characteristics

Mesocyclonic

Given either a supercell or an environment favorable for the formation of supercells:

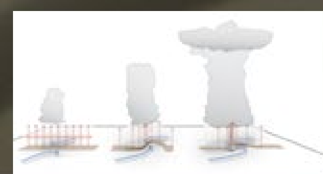
- Significant tornado parameter (Effective Layer) (STP_{eff}) > 1
- Effective bulk wind difference (EBWD) $\geq$ 39 kt
- Effective storm-relative helicity (ESRH) >150 m^2s^{-2}
- 100-mb mean parcel LCL (MLLCL) < 1000 m
- 100-mb mean parcel CAPE (MLCAPE) > 1500 J/kg
- 100-mb mean parcel CIN (MLCIN) < 50 J/kg within last hour



- Discrete supercell
- Strengthening updraft
- Acceleration & convergence into a strong, pre-tornadic, low-level mesocylone
- Tornado vortex signature (TVS)
- Tornado debris signature (TDS)

Non-Mesocyclonic (Landspout/Waterspout)

- Non-supercell tornado parameter (NST) > 1
- Stationary boundary with sfc relative vorticity (ζ_r) > 8 x $10^{-5}s^{-1}$
- 0-1 km lapse rate (LR_{0-1}) > 9°C/km
- 0-3 km MLCAPE ($MLCAPE_3$) > 100 J/kg
- 100-mb mean parcel CIN (MLCIN) < 25 J/kg

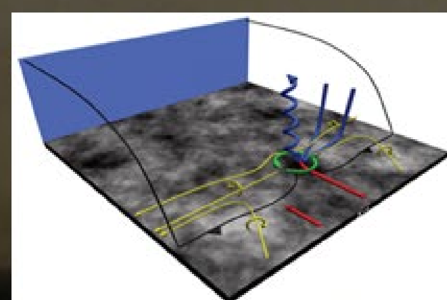


- Strong, rapidly growing updraft (best seen via time lapse loops of MRMS VII product or Z at -10°C)
- Tornado vortex signature (TVS)
- Tornado debris signature (TDS)

Quasi-Linear Convective System (QLCS)

Given a QLCS:

- 0-3 km line normal bulk shear $\geq$ 30 kt
- Rear Inflow Jet (RIJ) or enhanced outflow causing surge or bow in line
- 0-3 km MLCAPE ($MLCAPE_3$) $\geq$ 40 J/kg



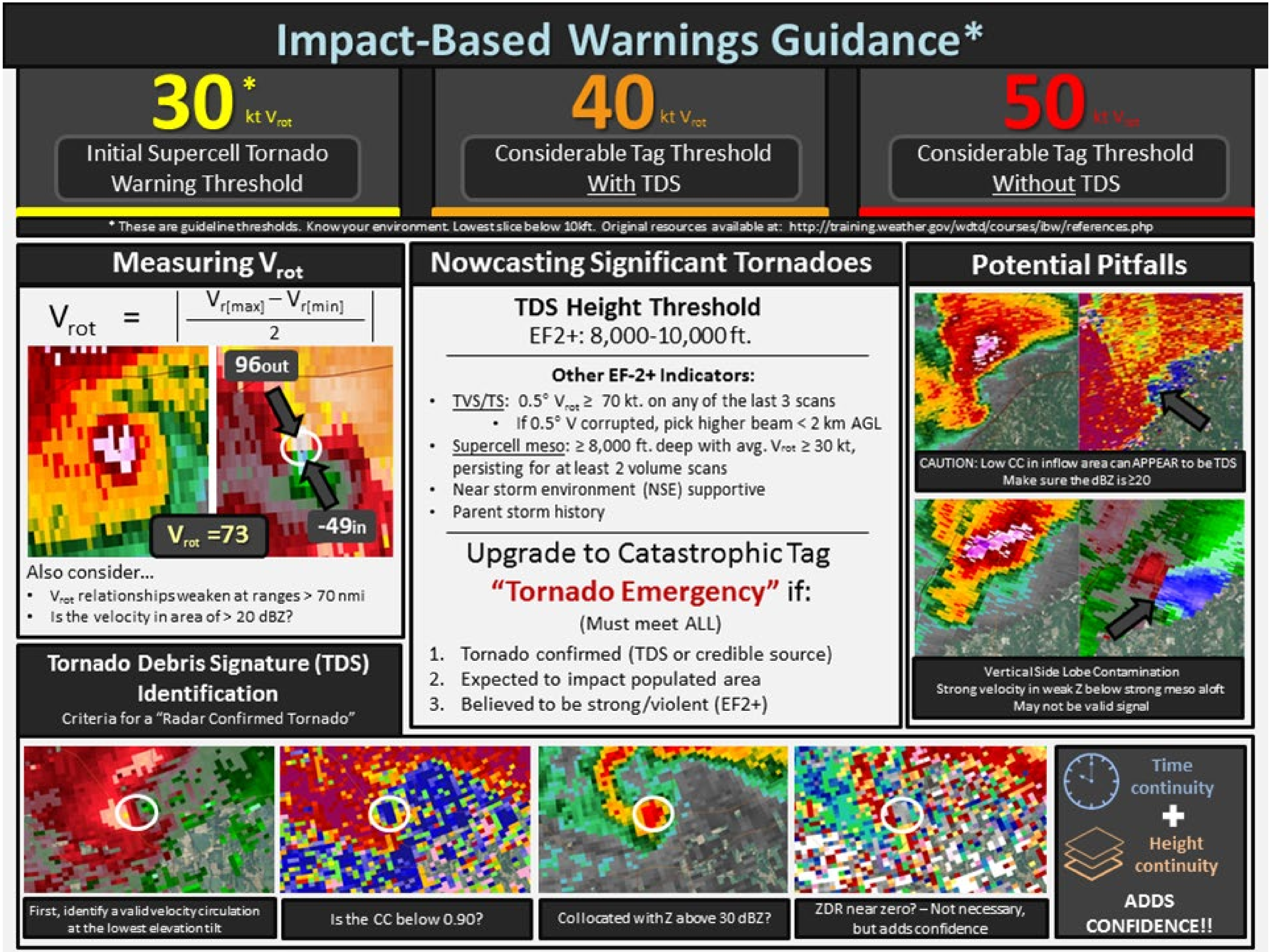
- Balanced or slightly shear dominant

Confidence Builders (3 Ingredients Method):

- Descending rear inflow jet (RIJ)/reflectivity drop
- Enhanced surge
- Line break
- Updraft deep cnvg zone (UDCZ) entry/inflection point
- Paired front/real inflow notch
- Boundary ingestions
- Front reflectivity nub
- Contracting bookend vortex with $V_r \geq$ 25 kt
- Tight/strong mesovortex with $V_r \geq$ 25 kt
- Confirmed tornado/Tornado Debris Signature (TDS)

Nudgers:

- Reflectivity tag intersecting a surge
- Cell merger/reflectivity spike near surge
- History of tornadoes



Impact-Based Warnings Guidance*
30* kt V_{rot}
Initial Supercell Tornado Warning Threshold
40 kt V_{rot}
Considerable Tag Threshold With TDS
50 kt V_{rot}
Considerable Tag Threshold Without TDS
* These are guideline thresholds. Know your environment. Lowest slice below 10kft. Original resources available at: http://training.weather.gov/wdtd/courses/ibw/references.php
Measuring V_{rot}
$V_{rot} = \left| \frac{V_{r[max]} - V_{r[min]}}{2} \right|$
96out
-49in
V_{rot} =73
Also consider…
• V_{rot} relationships weaken at ranges > 70 nmi
• Is the velocity in area of > 20 dBZ?
Nowcasting Significant Tornadoes
TDS Height Threshold
EF2+: 8,000-10,000 ft.
Other EF-2+ Indicators:
• TVS/TS: 0.5° V_{rot} ≥ 70 kt. on any of the last 3 scans
• If 0.5° V corrupted, pick higher beam < 2 km AGL
• Supercell meso: ≥ 8,000 ft. deep with avg. V_{rot} ≥ 30 kt, persisting for at least 2 volume scans
• Near storm environment (NSE) supportive
• Parent storm history
Upgrade to Catastrophic Tag
"Tornado Emergency" if:
(Must meet ALL)
1. Tornado confirmed (TDS or credible source)
2. Expected to impact populated area
3. Believed to be strong/violent (EF2+)
Potential Pitfalls
CAUTION: Low CC in inflow area can APPEAR to be TDS
Make sure the dBZ is ≥20
Vertical Side Lobe Contamination
Strong velocity in weak Z below strong meso aloft
May not be valid signal
Tornado Debris Signature (TDS) Identification
Criteria for a "Radar Confirmed Tornado"
First, identify a valid velocity circulation at the lowest elevation tilt
Is the CC below 0.90?
Collocated with Z above 30 dBZ?
ZDR near zero? – Not necessary, but adds confidence
Time continuity
+
Height continuity
ADDS CONFIDENCE!!

Tornado Warning Points of Emphasis*

* To be used in the full context and after completion of all NWS Warning Ops Training

Supercell Warning Confidence Thresholds

Eff. Layer Significant Tornado Parameter (STP)

Includes these ingredients:

- MLCAPE [100 mb]
- MLCIN [100 mb]
- MLLCL [100 mb]
- Effective SRH
- Effective BWD

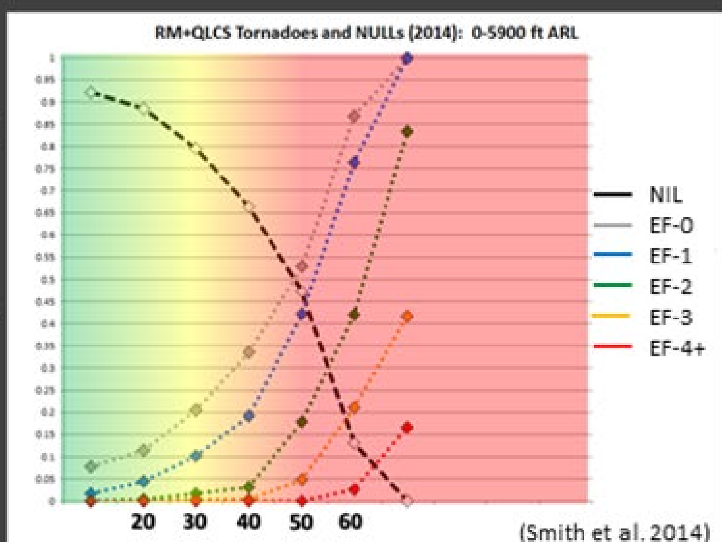
When using STP, be sure to also examine these ingredients individually during any severe weather mesoanalysis!

Is the Environment Favorable?

Given a 30-kt V_{rot} Signature:

Warning may be unnecessary	Best Practice Warning Threshold	Above Warning Threshold
0	1	3

STP (Effective Layer) Values



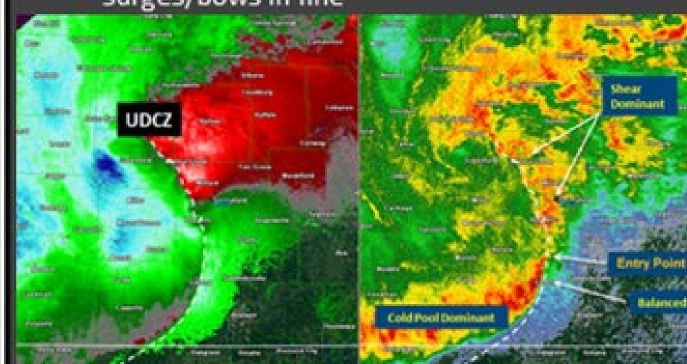
Keep in Mind...

- Use velocity data – presence of a hook indicates a supercell, not NECESSARILY a tornado
- Evaluate the storm/velocity at all elevation angles!
- Warn downstream with sufficient lead time
- Remember V_{rot} methods/pitfalls/TDS identification (see reverse)
- Attempt to limit false alarm area
- Collaborate on the CWA borders as much as possible
- Avoid "blanket" warnings in QLCS when possible

QLCS Three-Ingredients Method

Key features to look for when assessing QLCS tornado potential:

1. Balanced or slightly shear-dominant portion of line
2. 0-3-km line-normal bulk shear >30 kts
3. RIJ or enhanced outflow causing surges/bows in line



Other features to watch for:

- Updraft/downdraft convergence zone (UDCZ) entry/inflection point
- Descending RIJ or reflectivity drop
- Line break
- Paired front/rear inflow notch
- Front reflectivity nub
- Contracting bookend vortex (Vr > 25 kts)
- Tightening mesovortex (Vr > 25 kts)
- Cell merger/boundary ingestion

Remember: Rotational velocity will assess CURRENT intensity, but likely not provide much lead time on QLCS tornadoes. Stronger environments may require more proactive warnings.

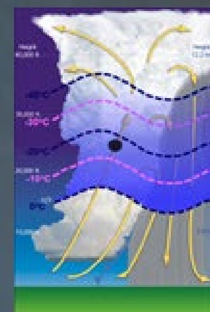
Hail

Near Storm Environment	Storm Characteristics

Severe (≥ 1-inch)

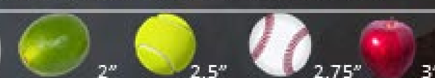
Given either a discrete thunderstorm or an environment favorable for the formation of discrete thunderstorms:

- Large hail parameter (LHP) > 4
- Most unstable CAPE (MUCAPE) ≥ 1600 J/kg
- Effective bulk wind difference (EBWD) ≥ 29 kt



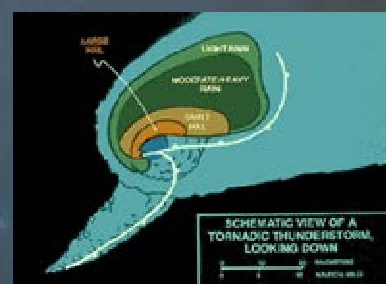
- Discrete thunderstorm
- Weak echo region (WER)
- 50 dBZ thickness above the melting level ≥ 16 kft
- Reflectivity (Z) ≥ 60 dBZ
- w/little rain: Z > 55 dBZ, CC = 0.95-0.97, ZDR < 1 dB, KDP < 1°/km
- w/rain: Z > 55 dBZ, CC = 0.93-0.96, ZDR = 1-2 dB, KDP > 0.5°/km
- Three body scatter spike (TBSS)
- Storm-top divergence (STD) ΔV > 70-102 kt
- Hail detection algorithm (HDA) ≥ 1"
- Max estimated size of hail (MESH) ≥ 1"

Significant (≥ 2-inch)



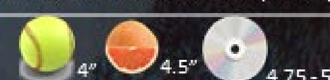
Given either a discrete supercell or an environment favorable for the formation of discrete supercells:

- Significant hail parameter (SHIP) > 1
- Large hail parameter (LHP) ≥ 5
- Most unstable CAPE (MUCAPE) ≥ 1850 J/kg
- Effective bulk wind difference (EBWD) ≥ 39 kt
- 700-500 mb lapse rate ($LR_{7\text{-}5}$) ≥ 6.5°C/km
- Surface to equilibrium level bulk shear ($Shear_{EL}$) ≥ 46 kt



- Discrete supercell
- Bounded weak echo region (BWER)
- Updraft persists ≥ 30 min
- 60 dBZ above -20°C
- Z > 55 dBZ, CC < 0.7 – 0.9, ZDZ ≈ 0 dB or lower
- Storm-top divergence (STD) ΔV > 130-162kt
- Peak mesocyclone rotational velocity (Vr) >27-41 kt
- Hail detection algorithm (HDA) ≥ 2"
- Max estimated size of hail (MESH) ≥ 2"

Giant (≥ 4-inch)



Given either a discrete supercell or an environment favorable for the formation of discrete supercells:

- Large hail parameter (LHP) ≥ 8
- Most unstable CAPE (MUCAPE) ≥ 3000 J/kg
- Effective bulk wind difference (EBWD) ≥ 46 kt
- 700-500 mb lapse rate ($LR_{7\text{-}5}$) ≥ 7.0°C/km
- Surface to equilibrium level bulk shear ($Shear_{EL}$) ≥ 60 kt

Add to Significant (≥ 2-inch):

- Storm-top divergence (STD) ΔV > 233-267 kt
- Peak mesocyclone rotational velocity (Vr) > 39-56 kt

Radar Estimated Hail Type/Size

Storm-Top Divergence

Peak ΔV (kts)	Max Hail Size (in.)
70-102	Quarter (1”)
115-147	Golf ball (1.75”)
174-207	Baseball (2.75”)
233-267	Softball (4”)

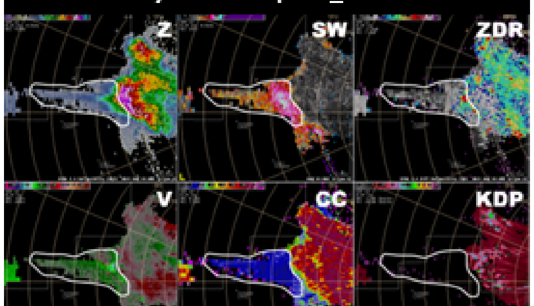
Adapted from Witt and Nelson, 1991

Mesocyclone

Hail Size (inches)	Peak Rotational Velocity (Vr) (kt)
1.75” to 2”	27-41
≥ 4”	39-56

Source: Blair et al., 2011

Three Body Scatter Spike ≥ 0.4 – 0.8 in.*



*Valid for S-band radar only, Source: Kumjian et al., 2010

DUAL-POL RADAR HAIL SIGNATURES

	Z 45-59 dBZ = Hail poss >60 dBZ = Hail likely	**ZDR** -0.3 to 1 dB ≈ Dry or large hail > 1 dB ≈ More liquid
	CC 0.93 – 0.97 ≈ 1-2” hail 0.70 – 0.90 ≈ ≥2” hail	**KDP** < 1°/km ≈ Mostly dry hail 1-3°/km ≈ Rain/hail combo >3°/km ≈ Melting hail
Hail Event Type	**Signature**	
Severe Hail (with little rain)	Z > 55 dBZ	ZDR < 1 dB
	CC ≈ 0.95–0.97	KDP < 1°/km
Severe Hail Mixed with Rain	Z > 55 dBZ	ZDR ≈ 1-2 bB
	CC ≈ 0.93–0.96	KDP > 0.5°/km
Sub-Severe Dry Hail	Z ≈ 45-55 dBZ	ZDR ≈ 0 dB
	CC > 0.98	KDP ≈ 0°/km
Sub-Severe Melting Hail	Z > 55 dBZ	ZDR > 2 dB
	CC ≈ 0.92–0.96	KDP > 4-5°/km
Significant (>2”) Hail	Z > 55 dBZ (>45 dBZ)	ZDR ≈ 0 dB or lower
	CC < 0.7-0.9	KDP “no data”

Wind

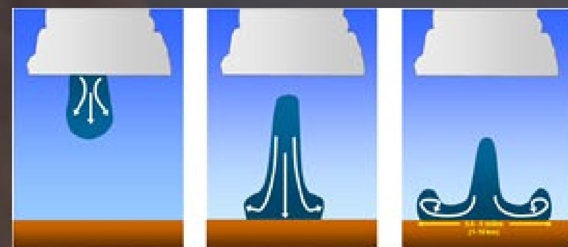
Near Storm Environment | Storm Characteristics

Individual Cell Downburst/Microburst

Given either a discrete thunderstorm or an environment favorable for the formation of discrete thunderstorms:

<u>Wet Microburst</u>:
- Microburst composite (MBCP) ≥ 5-8
- 0-3 km max theta-e difference ($\Delta\theta_e$) > 25°C
- Surface-based CAPE (SBCAPE) ≥ 3100 J/kg
- Downdraft CAPE (DCAPE) ≥ 900 J/kg
- Precipitable water (PW) ≥ 1.5"

<u>Dry Microburst</u>:
- Inverted-V sounding (apex based in mid-levels)
- Most unstable CAPE (MUCAPE) > 0 J/kg
- 100-mb mean parcel LCL height > melting level
- Weak effective bulk wind difference (EBWD)
- Weak boundary layer winds
- 0-3 km lapse rate (LR_{0-3}) ≥ dry adiabatic



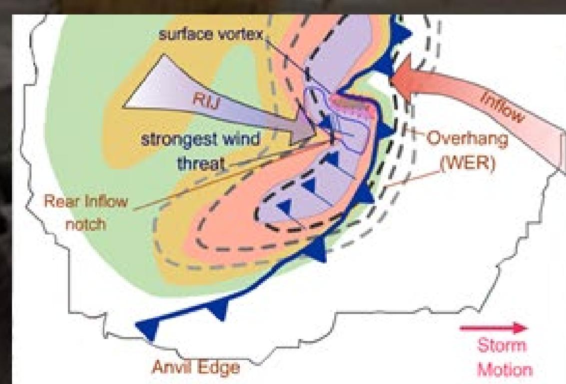
- Rapid formation of strong core aloft (best seen via time lapse loops of MRMS VII product or Z at -10°C)
- Descending core bottom
- Mid-altitude radial convergence (MARC) (0°C to lifted condensation level (LCL)) ΔV > 15 kt
- Melting hail signature (Three-Body Scatter Spike (TBSS), CC ~ 0.93-0.96, KDP > 3°C/km)
- Low-level (< 1500 ft AGL) velocity (V) > 30 kt

Note: Beware of low reflectivity (Z) cells w/high lifted condensation levels (LCLs) at 0°C and/or strong wind in mixing layer

Quasi-Linear Convective System (QLCS)/Derecho/Cold-Pool Driven

Given either a QLCS/derecho/cold-pool driven thunderstorm or an environment favorable for the formation of such:

- Derecho composite parameter (DCP) > 2
- Downdraft CAPE (DCAPE) > 980 J/kg
- 0-6 km mean wind > 16 kt
- Most unstable CAPE (MUCAPE) > 2000 J/kg
- Effective bulk wind difference (EBWD) > 20 kt



- Strong leading reflectivity (Z) gradient
- Bow echo
- Rear inflow jet (RIJ)
- Mid-altitude radial convergence (MARC) ΔV > 50 kts at 3-5 km AGL
- Deep convergence zone (DCZ) > 10 kft
  - > 15-20 kft is optimal
- Gust front hugs close to reflectivity (Z) gradient
- Linear weak echo region (WER) along leading edge
- Fast storm motion

Note: A mesovortex w/RIJ produces strongest wind