



Tornado Tours - Storm Chasers are Gearing Up to Conquer Tornado Season in the Plains

Storm chasers are getting ready for a very active tornado season, according to the National Weather Service.

Oklahoma City ([PRWEB](#)) April 23, 2005 -- In the heartland of America, the spring months are the mark of tornado season. And when hundreds of warning sirens sound in tornado alley, most people take immediate shelter.

But, there are a few daring individuals who head out on the plains in search of Mother Nature's most violent act, and storm chasers are gearing up for a very active tornado season, according to the National Weather Service.

"It's the No. 1 thing that man can't conquer. So we're going to try to conquer it by chasing it," says Jim Cantore, "storm tracker" meteorologist for The Weather Channel. "It's the thrill of the chase."

Storm chasers come in a wide variety. There are the chasers with a purpose, such as Cantore and storm chasing tour guide from Silver Lining Tours, Roger Hill, 47. And then there are the hobbyists who outfit their vehicles with all of the latest storm chasing gadgetry.

"It can get expensive really quick," says Hill, who operates a touring service for thrill seeking vacationers. "I've seen people go broke after spending thousands of dollars on electronic equipment and thousands more in gas money only to see a long period of inactivity or get their vehicles smashed up and their insurance wouldn't cover it."

"We offer our touring service to the type of person who would like to go storm chasing without the expense of doing it themselves," says Hill. "I have been chasing storms professionally for the past 11 years, so I know how to do this safely and that's another advantage of booking a storm tour instead of trying this yourself."

Last year, lightning struck three chasers who stopped to videotape a storm near Comanche, Texas. None of the chasers were seriously hurt. But "it felt about like grabbing hold of a raw 220-volt power wire," says David Drummond of Lubbock, TX.

"We are seeing more and more cars piling up at the scene of a forming tornado," says Brian Barnes of Bartlesville, OK. "Sometimes it looks like rush hour on I-45 in Houston, except we're on some Kansas country back road. This creates other dangers, and increases the time it takes for relief crews to reach storm victims."

Most experts agree that going on a storm chasing tour can help by minimizing the amount of rural traffic, thereby making it easier for emergency vehicles to reach affected areas. Another great advantage of storm tourism is these outfits are typically led by veteran storm chasers such as Roger Hill, which greatly increases the chances of the tourist seeing tornadoes.

Odds are that whenever you see tornado video on The Weather Channel, Roger Hill recorded it.



“I have worked closely with various media sources, including The Weather Channel for the past 11 years.” Says Hill. “They rely on me to get them tornado footage, that helps ensure our tour guest that they will get to see a real tornado in-person.

“This is just too dangerous for the inexperienced.” Says Barnes. “I’ve seen tornadoes in rural Texas pick up locomotives and pull large trees out of the ground by the roots. What do you think something like that could do to your SUV? You’re just better off to have a professional take you into something like this. That will greatly decrease the odds of someone getting hurt and increase the odds that they will see a tornado in the first place, they can be very hard to find.”

Roger Hill’s tour van is fully equipped with weather radar, various weather instruments, 2-way radios and computers. It is available for most of the trips operated by Silver Lining Tours. Mid spring tours are based in Oklahoma City and late spring tours in Denver. There are even summer tours that extend into the Northern High Plains and Southern Canada.

“You just wouldn’t believe the intensity of the tornadoes that happen in Southern Canada during the later parts of the year.” Says Hill. “Chasing in the high plains and Canada is one of my favorite places to find large tornadoes. There are less people chasing up there, which makes storm chasing even easier for us and the tornadoes generally move slower and stay on the ground longer, so they are easier to see and record on video as well.”

1,376 tornadoes occurred in 2003 followed by nearly 1,600 tornadoes in 2004, the most active tornado season on record since record keeping began in the 1950s. According to experts at the National Weather Service, we are seeing an increase in severe weather and 2005 will also be another highly active year for both tornadoes and hurricanes.

For more information

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