

Chatroom Procedures & Protocols

The Spotterchat may or may not be monitored by the NWS, depending on staff availability & workload. Likewise K4NWS may or not monitor the chat because of operator limitations or no callout being issued.

In any case it is encouraged that ALERT members monitor the Spotterchat when possible to assist with online storm reporting.

This is a unique opportunity for members at home, which can't respond to callouts. And, can be just as vitally important.

When monitoring the chats, in the event that Skywarn organizations such as Central Alabama Skywarn, Tuscaloosa Skywarn, or an individual Storm Spotter is unable to contact the NWS directly via the Spotter chat, an ALERT member will respond & let them know they are relaying their report to the NWS.

The ALERT member will then copy the report, go to the IEM chat & post the report in the following manner:

“Central Alabama Skywarn reports that...” (paste in their report), and, immediately post the report. Adding no commentary to the report (just as you would not add commentary to a NTS radiogram).

If the NWS asks for more details, respond, keeping it businesslike & “professional”, and relay their request and the replies.

Otherwise, on the IEM chat we would usually “maintain radio silence”, but, monitor the Spotter chat for more reports, until K4NWS or the NWS comes online.

Now, while we want everyone to “maintain radio silence” on the IEM chat, that's not the case with the Spotter chat.

The Spotter chat can and should be more interactive - ALERT members can initiate contact with the others coming online. For instance, seeing someone in Selma coming online asking him “Hi, Joe, how are your conditions down there?”

Or when if you see a bad or suspicious cell on radar, indicate that you are with ALERT & ask if there are any reports or if the online members can find any reports and bring them to the chat, just as we do on the VHF / UHF radios.

The group was ever to get too big & too unwieldy it could be like handled as an informal net with an ALERT NCS.

When more than one ALERT member is online, they can move to the ALERT Chat and coordinate the details as to monitoring the Spotter chat.