UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
WEATHER BUREAU

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(To All First Order Stations)

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Subject: Statements Concerning Tornado Forecasting

Frequently, when tornadoes ere in the news, the press quotes Weather 'Bureau officials as stating that, "Tornadoes cannot be predicted," or "The Weather Bureau does not make tornado forecasts," or even, "We are not permitted to issue tornado forecasts." Such statements are misleading and tend to reflect discredit on the Bureau.

The Weather Bureau has the responsibility of warning the public whenever possible of the approach of destructive local storms. It is true that localized forecasting of tornadoes is still dependent to a large extent upon timely reports of actual occurrences, but recognizing that fact, Weather Bureau officials have been able to act upon such reports from storm networks to broadcast tornado warnings when appropriate. More generally, the state or district forecasts for many years have indicated severe or destructive local storms under conditions that are favorable for tornadoes, and in such cases the forecaster (district or local) may at his discretion mention tornadoes in the forecast or warning.

The forecasting of tornadoes has long been recognized by the Bureau as one of its most difficult tasks, and the Bureau will continue to concentrate on the problem. Special studies to improve forecasts of local storms, including tornadoes, have been conducted at the Central Office and in the field for several years, and the Bureau wishes to make practical use of the knowledge gained from these studies. Obviously, reasonable caution must be used when forecasting tornado conditions, and there should be good probability of verification but when issued, these warnings should be given full distribution.

Weather Bureau employees should avoid statements that can be interpreted as a negation of the Bureau's willingness or ability to make tornado forecasts. The official viewpoint may be briefly stated: There is no regulation or order against the forecasting of tornadoes. Whenever the forecaster has a sound basis for predicting tornadoes, the forecast should include the prediction in as definite terms as the circumstances justify.

F. W. Reichelderfer
Chief of Bureau