

# The Catch

## **COCORAHS—IN APPRECIATION OF GOOD AND TIMELY RAIN AND HAIL**

FORT COLLINS, CO — Tuesday, May 15, 2007

Attention All CoCoRaHS Volunteers:

I want to recognize the dozens of you who made the effort yesterday to measure and report intense rain in progress. Several flash storms struck along the Colorado Front Range and eastern plains yesterday and last evening. Hail was also widespread with reports coming in from several counties. Total precipitation amounts were modest (mostly less than 1.50") but the intensity of rain was extreme. One of our volunteers in southwest Weld County (Colorado -- NNE from Denver) measured 2.13" of water -- some in the form of hail -- and all in only 14 minutes. It is very possible that even more may have fallen since hail can bounce out of our gauge funnels.

News reports this AM from Denver indicate that there was a tragic death associated with this flash flood and other frightening close calls. One does not usually associate rainfall amounts of 1.50" or less with extreme flooding, but when rain falls at extreme rates -- 3" to 8" per hour (even though the heaviest rains only lasted a few minutes), the results can be devastating. This is something we all need to keep in mind -- anywhere in the country. This is also a case where CoCoRaHS rainfall reports add very helpful information to weather forecasters and storm water managers.

If any of you in the storm-affected areas happened to have a second gauge collecting without a funnel, this would be an excellent case study to determine how much precipitation we may lose to splash and hail bounce. Please contact me if you have data from this storm.

### **Hail**

We had our first hail of the year at our house. I was impressed with the comment from one of our northeast Fort Collins observers who noted the roar that preceded the onset of the storm (hail is very noisy, even in a distance, for those who have not encountered major storms). Remarks like that really help tell the story.

## **High Density—High Definition—HD Rain Gauge Network**

So far today 130 CoCoRaHS volunteers in our local county (Larimer County, Colorado) have sent in their rainfall reports. Thanks to this incredible effort, we can map and describe rain and hail patterns with much certainty. Well over 100 reports also came in from the Denver area to define the storm track that went right through the heart of central Denver. Coincidentally, these storms struck on the eve of Colorado's spring flood threat review meeting that was held this AM in Denver.

When we have high concentrations of observations, we can skillfully assess storm patterns and study and just plain marvel at the variations that occur. That is one of the great benefits of CoCoRaHS that you are contributing to.

Many of us live in more sparsely populated areas where 100+ reports per county are unlikely or impossible. But sometimes just having 5-10 volunteers per county gives us much better data on local rainfall than we currently have. If you live in a county where only one or two volunteers are reporting, perhaps you could help us establish a more "high definition" network. Talk to your local Conservation District, Farm Service Agency county director, Cooperative Extension director or just call your newspaper or radio station. They may be able to help recruit a few more individuals to help.

### **Be prepared!**

The next four months are the time when rainfall can be most extreme and most variable. Your measurements are greatly appreciated and your efforts to recruit a few more volunteers could really help.

Thanks very much,

*Nolan Doesken*