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WEATHER 101: WHAT IS A DERENCHO?

Living in the mid-Atlantic with so many boaters, farmers and watermen we are closely attuned to the weather. So it is important to understand the weather phenomenon known as a Derecho (pronounced "deh-Rey-chco). Derechos are associated with bands of rapidly moving showers or thunderstorms variously known as bow echoes or squall lines. Although a derecho can produce destruction similar to that of a tornado, the damage typically occurs in one direction along a relatively straight path. As a result, the term "straight-line wind damage" is used to describe derecho damage.



Typically, our region averages a derecho about once every 2 to 4 years, as shown in the graphic "Derecho Climatology" from the National Weather Service (NWS) Storm Prediction Center (SPC).

The last significant derecho to hit the Washington DC-Baltimore metro region was on June 29, 2012 with

sustained 70 mph winds, one of the region's worst weather disasters in a generation. It came with little warning, not expected to maintain its strength across a path that started in the Midwest.

The National Weather Service does not issue "derecho warnings" as by their definition derechos are wind events produced by severe thunderstorms. Therefore, the NWS will issue a Severe Thunderstorm Warning if a derecho approaches your location. Realize that the vast majority of thunderstorms that impact our region will not be associated with a derecho. But, derechos can occur here and they could occur at any time; tomorrow, next week or next month, or not until several years from now. Monitoring your local NWS forecasts and media outlets is the best way to know if any future derecho or other types of severe weather could impact your location.

Think this is a new term or phenomenon? Actually the word "derecho" was coined in 1888 by Dr. Gustavus Hinrichs, a professor of physics at the University of Iowa.