

Meteorology

When the wind picks up, the skies turn green and sirens wail, most people think about finding shelter.

But meteorology majors at St. Cloud State University think about gathering data.

“It’s all a part of being a weather nut,” explained Prof. Robert Weisman of the St. Cloud State earth science department. “When everyone else is taking cover, these are the people out there getting excited because there’s a storm.”

Weisman is one of three meteorologists in the meteorology program at St. Cloud State, the only school in Minnesota to offer a major in meteorology. Since the program began eight years ago, 60 students have earned meteorology degrees.

Weisman said the biggest mistake budding meteorologists make is not taking enough math and science in high school. “Meteorology is a science,” he noted, “and at the college level, it requires three semesters of calculus, a full year of calculus-based physics, a semester of chemistry and a semester of statistics. Those are all prerequisites for upper-division meteorology courses.”

Another common misconception is that studying meteorology can lead only to a job as a TV weather person. In the eight years the program has been offered at St. Cloud State, five students have gone on to become TV weather forecasters. But others have been hired by the National Weather Service, a private forecasting firm in Burnsville and private companies interested in air pollution. Six have gone on to graduate school.

If you have ever called WCCO’s Travel Line weather service during holidays, you may have talked to a St. Cloud State meteorology student. The program won a government award for this internship program.

Weisman said there is a downside to majoring in meteorology: hail damage. Over-eager storm watchers sometimes get a little too close to the action.

Contact the St. Cloud State admission’s office at 800-369-4260 to find out more about the meteorology program.