As a tornado research meteorologist, Dr. Victor Gensini of the College of DuPage, was preparing to depart from Albany the afternoon of February 28, 2017, he wasn’t sure his flight was going to make it all the way to Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport (ORD airport code referenced in tweets).

There were thunderstorms throughout the region and the National Weather Service’s radar for the Chicago area (KLOT referenced in tweet) was inoperative at the time and had been inoperative throughout the day.

As the flight progressed west from Albany to Chicago, things were still dicey.

Yet the flight had a happy ending… United flight 683 and its passengers landed safely without incident. The “without incident” continued into the terminal where ORD officials were closely watching SkyGuard® updates from AccuWeather Enterprise Solutions on the intense, widespread thunderstorms.

Why does one of the most important airports in the world rely on AccuWeather? The reason is that our expert meteorologists, armed with our exclusive SmartWarn® technology, provide exact, tailored forecasts and warnings of high winds, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, hail, and other conditions that can affect the safety of passengers, the safety of airport employees, and the ability of flight operations to continue to operate in the changing weather conditions.

For example, the vast flat airfield makes ramp personnel and passengers in the open vulnerable to lightning strikes since there are no tall towers or tall buildings that would otherwise attract the dangerous bolts of electricity.
If lightning were to strike without warning, highly volatile aviation fuel might explode. Or, passengers and airport employees in the open could be electrocuted. AccuWeather solves the problem. We are able to provide this service because of our patented lightning forecasting technique which gives us the ability to warn before the first bolt even occurs. The National Weather Service does not issue lightning warnings.

How were we able to assure O’Hare there was no tornado risk even with the primary National Weather Service radar out of service? We have access to the two Federal Aviation Administration radars that provide fast, high-resolution data.

Of course, it is important that flights operate on time when it is safe to do so. So, we issue “all-clears” when lightning and other severe weather is safely out of the area.

In addition to lightning, tornadoes were also moving toward O’Hare. A National Weather Service tornado watch was in effect although it was unclear whether they would make it all the way to the city, especially since tornadoes had never occurred that far north in Illinois that early in the year.

Our expert meteorologists closely watched the situation and frequently communicated with the team at ORD. So, even though airport officials were ready to put their tornado warning plan into effect at a moment’s notice when the thunderstorms approached, AccuWeather’s meteorologists assured them it would not be necessary.

Your team’s assistance during the radar outage was very helpful. Please pass along my thanks again. You have a great team!

– Bill Lonergan, Chief of Operations, O’Hare International Airport

Our SkyGuard services are designed to protect people and property in order to mitigate the effect on the bottom line that extreme weather can cause. With the 2017 tornado season just beginning, now is the time to contact us today to learn how AccuWeather can protect your people, property, and profits!

These were the furthest north tornadoes in Illinois during the month of February on record.