

**A&M meteorologist watches the sky**

**Rain, hail may trigger tornadoes**

Weather scientists know tornadoes exist, they come out of the sky and at times are deadly. That's about where unanimity of opinion ends.

A Texas A&M University meteorologist has thrown a startling new premise into this ring of controversy. Dr. Phanindra M. Das blames rain and hail forces for generating tornadoes.

"There are scientists who want to ignore the possibility that rain and hail play a definite role in tornado formations," Das said. "But falling rain and hail do trigger a tornado.

"Rain or hail falls, dragging upper air with it. In the process, it evacuates the air aloft. Air then rushes in to fill this space," he explained. The intruding motion tightens the whirling motion of a rotating cloud. Pressure inside this whirl is still low, and it helps draw upward the unstable atmosphere below.

"Energy is released into this upward-moving air," Das said. "It intensifies the whirling motion, forming the tornado."

If Das can prove his theory, weather forecasters will be able to improve tornado

predictions. Today, the prediction of tornadoes is based on statistics, mainly because knowledge of actual tornado formation conditions are not clearly defined.

"The advantage of our research is that it is completely atmosphere oriented," Das said, "while most others are restricted by limitations imposed by laboratory conditions."

The tornado season began March 21, and meteorologists, especially Das, are watching this season with additional interest.

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