

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

through mid-August, taking thrill seekers on a high-speed hunt for potentially deadly storms.

Mar. 25, 2013

March 25 — Driving through west Texas on vacation when he was 7 years old, Lanny Dean's family ran into a heavy thunderstorm, with large hail pounding on the roof of the car.

"We went through a curtain of rain and there it was," Dean remembers. "The first tornado I had ever seen.

"The fear of it was overwhelming."

A relatively small twister, it crossed the highway about a mile ahead of them, doing no harm. But the adrenaline was addictive.

"That did it for me," he said. "I've been obsessed with the weather ever since."

With help from Dean and other entrepreneurs, Oklahoma's storm season has become a booming tourist attraction, drawing people from around the world.

"I just booked somebody from Japan," Dean said, his voice raspy last week from spending so much time on the phone with clients. "The one before that was from the UK."

Based in Tulsa, his Extreme Chase Tours are almost fully booked from early May through mid-August, taking thrill seekers on a high-speed hunt for potentially deadly storms.

For locals, spring weather is a yearly ordeal to survive. But for tourists, especially foreign tourists, it's an exotic adventure.

“They’ve never seen anything like it,” Dean said, noting that roughly one-third of his

Hello. It looks like you’re using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

A typical trip can cover 3,000 miles in less than two weeks, roaming from the Mexican border to North Dakota, all guided by the latest in storm-prediction technology.

Some take a few people at a time in SUVs. Others use a caravan of 15-passenger vans.

But it’s still such a niche industry that it remains unregulated. A storm chaser needs only to be bonded and insured like any other small business.

Clients pay \$200 to \$500 a day, depending on the tour company and the length of the trip.

“Safety is our first priority,” said Charles Edwards, owner of Norman-based Cloud 9 Tours. “There’s a right way and a wrong way of doing this.”

Last April in Dickinson County, Kan., officials blamed storm chasers for clogging roads and slowing down emergency vehicles.

“It was outrageously stupid,” a county administrator said at the time, according to media reports. “People were driving crazy. It was dangerous.”

That’s why people need professional tours, instead of “do-it-yourself” storm chasing, Edwards said.

“The last thing we want to do is get caught in a traffic jam,” he said, “or get in anybody’s way.”

The National Weather Service typically cooperates with professional chasers, helping them track storms in exchange for them giving on-the-ground reports back to forecasters.

“But it’s not as glamorous as it sounds,” Edwards said. “It’s a lot of gas station food

Hello. It looks like you’re using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

“It’s part technology, part instinct and part luck,” Edwards said.

“But the real goal isn’t to see a tornado — we can’t guarantee that — but to see severe weather. And during a certain part of the year, there’s always some of that to see.”

Copyright 2013 – Tulsa World, Okla.

Small Business • Technology

CPA Practice Advisor is registered with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) as a sponsor of continuing professional education on the National Registry of CPE Sponsors.

© 2024 Firmworks, LLC. All rights reserved