



Storm chasers Jeff and Kathryn Piotrowski

TORNADOES UP CLOSE

Most weather forecasters predicted storms along the border of Kansas and Missouri—near Joplin. By 11:00 a.m., Jeff Piotrowski and his wife, Kathryn, were in their Chevy Avalanche truck, hoping to catch up with the storm by late afternoon. Jeff was at the wheel, and Kathryn sat next to him with a video camera charged and ready. This was their weekend routine during tornado season. They sometimes drove one thousand miles or more on their weekend chases. And they were

not alone. There are often hundreds of storm chasers on the roads during tornado season.

For some people, storm chasing is a thrilling hobby, a chance to see one of nature's most powerful forces up close. They speed after violent weather, hoping to come home with awesome videos to post on YouTube.

But others, like the Piotrowskis, are working to unravel the secrets of tornadoes. These men and women often work as "storm spotters" for the National Weather Service. They provide early warnings that tornadoes are coming, which helps save lives. Over the years, tornado videos captured by storm chasers have helped scientists better understand storms and tornadoes.

Of course, chasing after a supercell thunderstorm is extremely dangerous. Tornadoes can appear suddenly. They can change directions without warning. Winds traveling 200 miles per hour can peel a storm chaser's car off a highway