

Forecasting the fate of Lake Michigan storms

University of Illinois atmospheric scientist David Kristovich tested a mobile sounding system that might help predict the fate of storms that move across Lake Michigan. This system measures temperature, humidity, and atmospheric pressure.

“The Great Lakes make it difficult to predict summer weather. One problem weather forecasters face is determining what will happen when massive storms reach one side of the lake.

It is hard to figure out if those storms will make it across to the other side and cause severe weather,”

Kristovich said. “We don’t have a lot of information. On the lake, we don’t have people taking observations all over the place like we do on land.”



Graduate students Joe Wegman, left, and Luke Bard prepare to launch a rawinsonde near Lake Michigan.

Courtesy of David Kristovich

The device they used is called a rawinsonde, which is attached to a weather balloon with a parachute. Because the system is connected to a balloon, researchers were also able to record the wind direction and speed.

Kristovich said having a test run for the device was critical for ironing out issues for future projects.