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Plano Entrepreneur Makes Hail a Hot Commodity

Daron Sneed of Dynamic Weather Solutions - HailStrike mined the data from a federal agency and creatively turned into a thriving business.



HailStrike provides data for use in insurance claims, roofing and for private homeowners. Photo: Endurodog via iStock

BY LANCE MURRAY • AUG 11, 2016

Even though he lives and works in an area known for its severe storms, hail data entrepreneur Daron Sneed didn't find his niche because he was a storm chaser or a meteorologist.

Sneed, the founder and CEO of Plano-based Dynamic Weather Solutions – HailStrike, established the company in 2010 after two previous career paths led down dangerous or, at the least, uncomfortable corridors.

For eight years, Sneed worked as a bounty hunter.

“I got tired of people shooting at me,” he said.

Leaving that profession, Sneed got into the roofing business, but soon discovered he had a fear of heights.

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Daron Sneed

“Getting up on a roof every day wasn’t what I was looking forward to,” Sneed said.

That fear of heights led Sneed to look for ways to find hail-damaged homes without having to constantly climb up ladders and overcome the uneasy feelings he encountered.

In the summer of 2010, Sneed said there was a major hail storm in Tyler, Texas, east of Dallas-Fort Worth. Sneed went to Tyler looking for roofing opportunities. But he wasn’t familiar with Tyler, and by the time he figured out the area, “it was a roofer’s convention there.”

FEDERAL AGENCY HAD EXTENSIVE DATA ON HAIL ACTIVITY

Sneed realized he needed to find an edge, a way to more easily locate potential roofing customers. He began doing research in the evenings looking for the “dynamics of a hail storm,” and he found his answers in information available to the public through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a federal agency that is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce. It focuses on the conditions of the world’s oceans and the atmosphere.

The data was plentiful but not organized in a marketable fashion, and at the time, Sneed said he thought, “If you put this information together, it could be some useful data.”

Sneed connected with a programmer, and together they took the data and created a HailStrike smartphone app in 2011. But, Sneed encountered a problem.

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“We were ahead of our time, not many people had smartphones,” he said.

Sneed and the programmer went back to work, and in 2012, a desktop version was introduced.

What set his app apart, Sneed said, was that while other services allowed you print out maps, his product could be used as a tool, something that roofers, insurance companies, and homeowners could find helpful.

“I’m real big on solutions and ideas,” Sneed said. “Over the course of the years, I’ve come up with several unique products.”

HailStrike is one of the companies of Dynamic Weather Solutions, and it, along with its sister companies, have been one-stop shopping for historical data on hail activity and monitoring across the nation since 2011.

WHO USES HAIL DATA IN THEIR BUSINESSES?

Roofers can use the service to locate recent hail-damaged areas. Insurance companies can use the information to help approve or deny claims. Public adjusters can use the data to help

support their homeowner clients trying to file insurance claims.

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Within minutes, HailStrike customers can get an 11-page report on hail activity at any address that goes back to January 2011. The report includes the size of the hail, the speed of the storm, and its duration.

Two weeks ago [Dynamic Weather Solutions](#) launched its “Claim” service which gives customers complete location analysis and information

management capabilities for all their projects. Customers not only get info on a home, they get information on hail activity, and Claim shows a list of previous hail activity for any particular house or business location.

And, HailStrike’s AniSwath service provide real-time colorized, animated hail activity maps that show the storm’s size, its probability for severe hail, and its coverage area. That allows roofers to better target their canvassing efforts.

Sneed said his company’s products are particularly helpful to public adjusters who represent homeowners in their dealings with insurance companies.



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