



Aware

Aware is published by NOAA's National Weather Service to enhance communications between NWS and the Emergency Management Community and other government and Private Sector Partners.

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From the Top: NWS Marks Major Milestone Towards Improved Services

By [Laura Furgione](#), NWS Deputy Director



Laura Furgione, NWS Deputy Director

I am excited to report another positive milestone in NWS' deployment of the next-generation Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS II). Group 4 successfully completed its 30-day test on schedule.

Group 5 began installing AWIPS II on October 20 and was scheduled to begin testing on November 17. Assuming Group 5 successfully completes testing on schedule, NWS will install AWIPS II in all remaining Weather Forecast Offices (WFO) as planned. All NWS River Forecast Centers RFCs and National Centers have already successfully installed AWIPS II.

Providing forecasters with a more robust communications system improves their ability to make precise and accurate predictions and issue timely, reliable warnings and advisories. The increased capabilities that AWIPS II brings to our field offices are key to building a Weather-Ready Nation. AWIPS II will provide our agency with an open-source, service-oriented architecture that will allow us to deploy future weather products and enhanced services in a more timely fashion.

Attaining this important milestone would not have been possible without the hard work and dedicated support of several organizations and individuals, including our AWIPS prime contractor, Raytheon, as well as our regional AWIPS focal points. I look forward to providing further updates soon as we work toward the completion of AWIPS II across the NWS.

News and Updates: California Drought Service Assessment Underway

By [NWS Insider Staff](#), Silver Spring, MD

The severe drought in California that started in 2011 has had widespread consequences across the Golden State. The drought has created significant economic, societal and environmental impacts on communities small and large and has prompted a closer look at how the state handles an increasingly valuable resource: water. Because California is the nation's most populous and diverse state with enormous agricultural and fisheries industries, the drought impacts are being felt worldwide. As a result, NOAA is conducting its first multi-agency, drought service assessment.

A 10-member service assessment team includes members from all five NOAA Line Offices, NOAA Public Affairs and the California Department of Water Resources. The assessment team is divided into sub-teams focusing on agriculture, water resources and fisheries. The assessment has two main goals. First, to better understand and describe the decisions impacted by the drought and identify ways to improve NOAA's services to water resources, agriculture, fisheries and municipal governments. Second, to assess the effectiveness of real time decision support provided by NWS data, forecasts and services to sectors impacted by the drought during winter and spring 2014.

In August, the team went to northern and central California to meet with key partners and interview staff at some of the NOAA line offices impacted by the drought. The team prepared its report in October and plans to have a draft copy with findings and recommendations for senior NOAA and NWS leadership in November. If possible, NOAA will use some of the recommendations in this service assessment during the 2014-2015 water year. NOAA will publish a final public version of the service assessment in early 2015.



News and Updates: Comments Wanted on Proposed TsunamiReady Guidelines

By [Rocky Lopes](#), NWS Tsunami Program

NWS is seeking comments on proposed new guidelines for its quickly growing TsunamiReady program. Last summer, TsunamiReady Guidelines Project co-leaders Troy Nicolini, Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Eureka, CA; and Rocky Lopes, Tsunami Program, NWS Headquarters, received more than 200 comments, suggestions and ideas related to the proposed guidelines. NWS staff developed the guidelines from a social science report prepared by a team headed by Dr. Chris Gregg.

The proposed guidelines are open for public comments on the [NTHMP website](#). Some of the issues tackled in the new guidelines include:

- ◆ Resolving Issues from the First Comment Period
- ◆ Developing a Tier Two set of guidelines for communities working toward long-term resiliency goals
- ◆ Separating out suggestions not related to the TsunamiReady program into their own independent document

The team will next recommend ways to implement the guidelines, including how and when to grandfather current TsunamiReady communities and counties. The implementation plan will be jointly developed by the NWS and its NTHMP partners. Check the [NTHMP website](#) for updated information. Please send comments and questions to [Rocky Lopes](#) and [Troy Nicolini](#).



Decision Support: Long Lead Time Blowing Dust Advisories Improve Decision Making

By [Glenn Lader](#), Meteorologist, and [Ken Drozd](#), WCM, NWS Tucson, AZ

Blowing dust is a significant problem across southeast Arizona and beyond, especially during the monsoon season when strong thunderstorm outflow winds can form large dust storms or haboobs. These haboobs limit visibility to near zero at times. Dust storms most often form in the deserts just to the north and west of Tucson and typically increase in size as they roll down the valley toward the Phoenix Metropolitan area. These dust storms cause numerous fatal accidents along Interstate 10, the major transit thoroughfare between Tucson and Phoenix.

As high resolution numerical modeling has expanded in the past few years, NWS Tucson forecasters have noticed an improvement in the accuracy of the convective forecasts and resultant outflow winds forecasts. This improved accuracy has given NWS Tucson the confidence to begin issuing Blowing Dust Advisories farther in advance of when forecasters expect a haboob to form later in a given day.

NWS still issues Dust Storm Warnings when visibility is or expected to be less than a quarter mile, but with the improved models, NWS can give the drivers time to alter their plans for later in the day. These longer lead warnings give NWS partners, such as the Arizona Department of Transportation and Department of Public Safety, more time to prepare and position resources for these events.

During the last summer's monsoon season, NWS Tucson issued accurate Blowing Dust Advisories long before the conditions actually developed. During July and August, significant blowing dust events occurred on all 4 days for which NWS Tucson issued an advisory. Lead times were generally between 6-12 hours for these four events.

Before implementing these longer lead-time advisories, NWS Tucson worked with staff at the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ) to include air pollution



description levels. The advisories also included PDEQ contact information. This information has enhanced PDEQ's ability to distribute its message effectively.

Decision Support: Live Twitter Chats Win Public Praise

By [Glenn Lader](#), Meteorologist, NWS Tucson, AZ

From September 17-18, Hurricane Odile moved up the Baja peninsula and then weakened as it moved into the desert Southwest as a remnant low. Odile resulted in several inches of rainfall across southern Arizona into New Mexico, producing significant flooding.

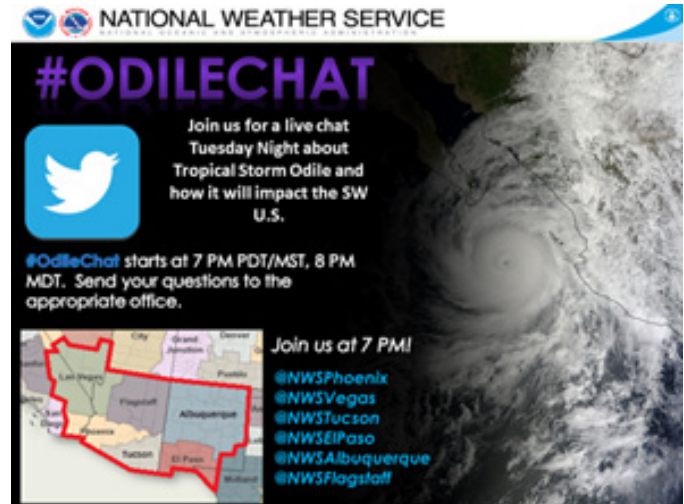
To help local Emergency Managers and other partners prepare, NWS Tucson initiated a live 1-hour evening Twitter chat on September 14. The concept was so successful, it quickly turned into a region-wide effort by NWS Tucson, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Flagstaff.

After the success from the first night, chats were held the following 2 nights, September 15-16. As Odile shifted east, NWS El Paso, TX, and Albuquerque, NM, joined the chat sessions. The twitter chats were widely promoted by each of these NWS offices on their Facebook pages and on Twitter, using the hashtag #OdileChat.

The chats gave our partners and the public an opportunity to directly interact with NWS staff and ask questions about the storm, forecast confidence, possible impacts, etc. Numerous partner agencies, such as the Arizona Department of Transportation, retweeted pertinent points.

The public praised NWS for holding the chat sessions and taking the time to directly answer questions. The media also expressed high praise for the chats on both a local and national media. The Weather Channel mentioned the chats numerous times on air during an interview with NWS Phoenix staff after one of the chat sessions. NWS Las Vegas and Phoenix also produced a "Storify" web page each night to provide more information.

Given the success of this approach, the chats are now going to be considered a best practice for high impact events and a useful decision support tool.



Outreach Innovation: LEGO Team Helps Two Communities Become StormReady

By [Jim Kramper](#), WCM, NWS St. Louis, MO



Team Phantom (from left): Michael Colletti, Katie Montgomery, Catherine Colletti and Matt Montgomery

The Phantom of the LEGOs Robotics Team was successful in getting two St. Louis County communities, Ballwin and Wildwood, to become recognized as StormReady.

Each year the First LEGO League announces a theme and challenge for the robotics teams for the annual robotics competition. This past year the theme was "Nature's Fury." The challenge had four components:

- ◆ Identify a community that could experience a natural disaster
- ◆ Identify a problem that happens when a natural disaster occurs
- ◆ Create an innovative solution that helps people prepare, stay safe, or rebuild
- ◆ Share the problem and solution with others

When a local LEGO team saw a newspaper article about a neighboring county StormReady recognition, the team decided to make StormReady recognition the focus of their project. This goal would help improve the safety and preparedness of a town and get more citizens aware of the program, which would encourage them to become more prepared for weather emergencies.

The team took their idea and proposal to two cities in which team members lived: Ballwin and Wildwood, MO. With help from NWS St. Louis, MO, and local EMs, both cities were recognized as StormReady this past summer. At the local qualifying tournament, the Phantom of the LEGOs team received the Presentation Award, which best recognizes the team that most effectively communicates to the judges the problem the team has identified and its proposed solution. At the Eastern Missouri Championship, the team won a second award: the Gracious Professionalism trophy.

And the team is not done yet. They plan on visiting more communities in St. Louis County in an effort to get them StormReady.

Outreach Innovation: The Lakeland Center Earns Three NWS Recognitions

By [Daniel Noah](#), NWS Tampa Bay Area

The Lakeland Center in Lakeland, FL is the first in the nation to complete all three National Weather Service recognitions for enhancing hazardous weather safety plans at its facility. The recognitions include StormReady, Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, and the Lightning Safety Toolkit.

The Center is a multi-purpose, open air arena, theatre, and conference center that can host multiple events of up to 20,000 attendees. Lightning is a significant threat in the summer. The center communicates the threat via large display boards, TVs and announcements. Most guests choose to remain inside until the storms have passed rather than race to their vehicles. The Lakeland Center is the hurricane shelter for county equipment and crews and has a strong relationship with Polk County Emergency Management, Fire Rescue and the Lakeland Police Department, all of which attended the recognition ceremony to celebrate the center's achievement.



The LakeLand Center, FL, StormReady, Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, Lightning Toolkit Recognition

Outreach Innovation: Spotter Classes Made More Accessible with Google+

By [Gary Woodall](#), WCM, NWS Memphis, TN

On November 12, WFO Memphis conducted its first ever Live Google+ Online Spotter Training Class. The class was a success and received positive reviews from all attendees. Over 300 people viewed the presentation and to date we have received 100+ requests for certificates. The class received national attention on Twitter throughout the weather community. Thanks to Meteorologist Intern John Moore, Lead Forecaster John Howell, and Forecaster Jim Branda for organizing and conducting the session.

Aware

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