



# 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.*

July 2015

## WeatherFest All-hazards Preparedness Expo at WFO San Diego

By [Alex Tardy](#), WCM, NWS San Diego, CA

On May 9, NWS San Diego, led by General Forecaster Jimmy Taeger, and Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) Alex Tardy, hosted its first Weatherfest All-Hazards Preparedness Expo. The event brought together emergency communication partners and several private and nonprofit groups to share safety information with the community. WeatherFest was held on the anniversary of the 2014 major wildfires in San Diego County. PBS San Diego taped TV and radio stories on the anniversary featuring NWS, Carlsbad and San Diego officials, and the San Diego Gas and Electric spokespersons.

The 4-hour event held outside NWS San Diego's offices, included equipment and booths representing 25 organizations and 75 participants; more than 600 people attended. Participating organizations included the U.S. Navy, Federal Fire, Tijuana Estuary Research Reserve, Fleet Weather, San Diego City and County Fire, RACES, CERT, 211, U.S. Border Patrol, American Red Cross, Bureau of Land Management, Tribal International, San Diego County Office of Education and Plant!T Now's Owlie Skywarn.

NWS San Diego staffed three booths: a main booth with information and office tour sign-ups, a kids booth, and a CoCoRaHS volunteer center. NWS staff members gave tours of the office every 15 minutes and provided games for the kids and the chance to meet the NWS safety mascot, Owlie Skywarn.

Emergency equipment on location included five large fire engines, four communication trailers, emergency and enforcement vehicles and the unique new San Diego Gas and Electric wind profiler. The booths included weather art; weather photography; earthquake, tsunami and wildfire displays; amateur radio equipment; kid's games and learning activities; native reptiles; and numerous all-hazard preparedness brochures.

NWS staff gave each family a red WeatherFest bag to collect brochures. Attendees could also purchase a red WeatherFest t-shirt from the local NWS Skywarn club. KUSI TV San Diego broadcasted live from 9 am to 11 am; CW6 San Diego TV taped interviews from 11 am to 1 pm. In all, there were four on camera weathercasters present during the event. NWS San Diego staff wore red WeatherFest t-shirts supplied by Southwest California Skywarn.

The event was held with a minimal budget but drew great reviews. Key factors for the event success were NWS staff efforts to secure additional parking near its offices, designed flyers, coordinated with each partner, rented tables and portable toilets, and design event maps. The success is a direct reflection of months of hard work and our strong relationships with partner organizations, volunteers such as Skywarn, local media, and the public. Plant!T Now supplied the Owlie Skywarn costume, making it an exciting event for kids. The event was registered with FEMA PrepareAthon and National Wildfire Community Safety.



*Meteorologist Brett Albright donned the Owlie Skywarn mascot costume, courtesy of Plant!T Now Young Meteorologist program at the NWS San Diego WeatherFest.*

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## NWS Office Aggressively Prepares for Wildfire Threat

By [Ted Buehner](#), WCM, NWS Seattle, WA

NWS Seattle has taken an aggressive response to what looks to be a particularly intense fire season. NWS Seattle WCM Ted Buehner helped organize a fire weather media tour in early July, which garnered the highest interest in these partnered efforts in more than two decades.

Buehner commented, “We gave area media many story ideas and emphasized key topics like the wildfire threat to both rural and urban areas, and the wildfire threat in previous “safe” areas in western Washington. We also offered a look ahead at a likely warm dry summer.

Teamwork made the media effort even stronger. Shoreline Fire Chief Matt Cowan, King County Fire Chiefs Association President, and Janet Pearce of Washington Department of Natural Resources partnered with incident meteorologist Steve Reedy and myself to visit all the Seattle TV news, news radio and the Seattle *Times* newspapers -- 23 journalists in all. The U.S. Forest Service supplied the latest information on federal land fire restrictions.

The media tour team ensured these news organizations had the latest wildfire resource information, as well as contact information for future interviews, social media links and more.



*MJ McDermott of Q-13 interviews Steve Reedy, NWS Seattle Incident Meteorologist.*

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## NWS Helps Keep Alert Level High Despite a Decade of Calm

By [Todd Barron](#), Emergency Response Meteorologist, NWS Tampa Bay Area, FL



*Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn briefs the media before the exercise. From left: Chauncia Willis, Tampa Emergency Manager; Todd Barron, Meteorologist, NWS Tampa Bay; Eric Ward, Tampa Chief of Police; Bob Buckhorn, Mayor; and Tom Forward, Tampa Fire Chief.*

How do you keep emergency response sharp during a decade with no major hurricanes? The Tampa Emergency Management Agency’s response was to activate its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for a severe weather drill on June 16.

The exercise focused on how Tampa and Hillsborough county agencies would respond when a Category 3 hurricane made landfall in northern Pinellas County. Before the exercise, Tampa Emergency Manager Chauncia Willis solicited exercise material from NWS Tampa Bay WCM Dan Noah, who provided track and guidance graphics as well as impact graphics for a Category 3 storm. Emergency Response Meteorologist Todd Barron was on scene for this exercise and provided weather information and areas of concern for the post-landfall drill. Todd also took part in a media briefing and answered questions with the Tampa mayor, chief of police, EM director and fire chief.

When interviewed by the local ABC affiliate, Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn commented, “You only are as good as you practice and if you practice hard, if you train hard, if you sharpen your skills, that’s how you’re going to play when the event occurs. So even though we haven’t had a significant event in a long time, we still have to stay sharp.”

The drill was particularly valuable because it stressed the role of multiple agencies responding to hazmat incidents, distress calls and civil unrest. For each post-storm inject, summertime Florida weather remained a concern, given heat-related impacts and severe weather potential.

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## NWS Decision Support at Rolling Stones Concert

By [Nick Petro](#), WCM, NWS Raleigh, NC

NWS Raleigh recently provided onsite decision support to North Carolina State University Emergency Management during the July 1 Rolling Stones Concert at NC State's Raleigh campus. Raleigh forecaster Katie Dedeaux and Hollings Scholar Raelene Campbell were on site in the stadium's fourth floor incident command post. The team briefed emergency officials as severe thunderstorms moved in from the west, potentially threatening the more than 40,000 attendees at this outdoor event. Fortunately, the storms weakened before reaching the stadium and the concert went on without weather-related delays.

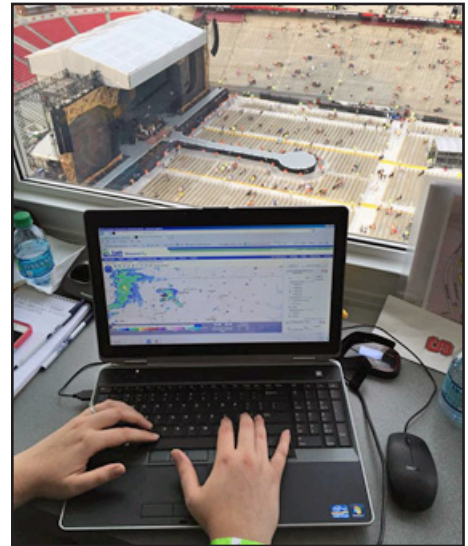
Katie and Raelene learned several best practices from this event to improve on-site briefing services. The team discovered mobile internet can get quickly bogged down when 40,000 people in a confined area are using their smart phones and overwhelming the data flow provided by nearby cell phone towers. While there was just enough bandwidth available to maintain timely radar updates, they quickly adjusted their data strategy and refrained from downloading nonessential weather products.

Another best practice was the collaboration that took place not only between the onsite NWS staff and the emergency officials, but also between the onsite NWS staff and the staff back at the forecast office. Katie and Raelene frequently conferred by phone with the evening shift staff about pending thunderstorm warning decisions and storm timing. This collaboration was especially important given that severe thunderstorm warnings were in effect just a short distance west of the concert venue.

"In today's world, anyone can pull out their smart phone or tablet radar app and make a reasonable assessment about the thunderstorm potential at any given location; however, nothing beats having NWS expertise at your side when making weather-related decisions that can affect the safety of tens of thousands of people," said WCM Nick Petro, NWS Raleigh. "That's what onsite decision support services provided to our local, state, and federal government partners is all about," Petro said.

WFO Raleigh is housed on NC State's Centennial Campus. WFO Raleigh and NC State have a great relationship. In addition to supporting the university emergency managers, this decision support event provided a great learning opportunity for WFO Raleigh's Hollings Scholar Raelene Campbell. Raelene, stationed at Raleigh for the summer and working on a North Carolina Tornado Climatology project, had the opportunity to experience first-hand one of the key components of the [NWS Weather-Ready Nation](#) initiative.

WFO Raleigh has a growing decision support program that includes weekly impact weather briefings, high-impact weather webinars and email briefings, remote weather support via the state's 800 Megahertz radio system, a robust social media program, and on-site decision support services for high-impact events and incidents.



*Forecaster Katie Dedeaux keeping a close watch on storms approaching from the west as the stadium was filling up with Rolling Stones concert-goers.*

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## Last House Standing: Test Your Home Safety IQ

Adapted from an article by [FLASH](#)

The Federal Alliance for Safe Home (FLASH), one of NWS's most active Weather-Ready Ambassadors, has released a free social gaming application, [Last House Standing](#)™ in [Apple](#) & [Android](#) formats. FLASH is asking emergency managers and other safety partners to download, play, review, and challenge your friends to play as you share the app through your internal and social-networking channels.



The games introduce the next generation of home buyers, builders, owners, and renters to one central point—how and where you build or rent is the most fundamental element of disaster survival for families and helps home owners protect their property and belongings.

The project idea grew from research such as FEMA’s Preparedness in America report which indicated 58 percent of 18 to 34 year olds surveyed do not recognize disaster safety as a priority. Specifically, survey respondents expressed the need to know “where to begin” to be protected and resilient in the face of hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires and more.

The game requires iOS 7.0 or later, and is compatible with iPhone, iPad, and iPod Touch as well as most Android devices. While the app is optimized for iPhone 5, iPhone 6, iPhone 6 Plus and iPad 4 or later, it will also operate on older models.

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## Monthly Tabletop Exercises Keep Aviation Weather in Focus

By [Jessica Nolte](#), Aviation Focal Point, NWS Phoenix, AZ

The Phoenix Aviation Emergency Preparedness group at Phoenix Sky Harbor airport hosts monthly tabletops, bringing together different operations groups of the airport along with airline partners and other stakeholders such as the TSA, Phoenix Fire and Police, Arizona Wing of the Air National Guard and the NWS.

The goal of these tabletops is to prepare and train staff so everyone can effectively respond to airport emergencies. Drill topics to date have included:

- ◆ Shooter, employee or insider threat
- ◆ Terminal fire or evacuation
- ◆ Severe weather event and subsequent concourse damage

Along with the monthly tabletops, the group held a live exercise in early June in Terminal 3 of Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. The terminal made a perfect practice area because it was vacated for a major modernization project. Along with providing weather injects for the scenario beforehand, Phoenix Aviation Focal Point Jessica Nolte played the role of a separated passenger looking to reunite with her family. Feedback from volunteers and partners during post-exercise identified several issues:

- ◆ Improving visual communication for the deaf/hard of hearing
- ◆ Locating ramp/airline personnel to communicate ramp safety. Three unplanned falls happened on the uneven ramp surface during the exercise
- ◆ Staying abreast of weather conditions while passengers and staff were out on the tarmac surface.
- ◆ The table tops provided valuable feedback on ways to more effectively communicate weather information during high impact or emergent situations.



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## Field Trips Highlighted NWS Support at ASFPM 2015

By [Kent Frantz](#), Senior Service Hydrologist, NWS Peachtree City, GA

In June 2015, NWS Peachtree City, GA, took part in the [Annual 2015 Association of State Flood Plain Managers Conference in Atlanta, GA](#). NOAA National Ocean Service and NWS staff supported breakout workgroups, hosted the

NOAA Exhibit Booth, and guided field tours.

This year's conference "[Mitigation On My Mind](#)" drew more than 1100 participants, including many floodplain and emergency managers actively engaged in reducing the nations flood risk within our coastal and riverine communities. The guided field tour of [Peachtree Creek](#) was an added outreach element for NWS, which culminated months of collaboration between NWS, the U.S. Geologic Survey, and the ASFPM GA Chapter. the tour provided interpretations of the Peachtree Creek, history of recent flooding, flood impacts to the communities, and federal activities to help mitigate future floods. At one of the field stops, USGS setup a tent with computers to help visualize the September 2009 floods during which the river rose 20 feet and almost flooded the bridge.



*Anthony Gotvald, USGS, describes the USGS gaging equipment and its value in observing and monitoring streamflows on Peachtree Creek.*

NWS looks forward to working with other federal agencies and non-government organizations, such as ASFPM, to raise awareness of flood risk in our communities.

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## National Parks Partner with NWS on Lightning Safety

By [Jim McNitt](#), U.S. National Park Service, Bryce Canyon, UT



Bryce Canyon National Park (BRCA) in Utah has beefed up its lightning safety campaign this year to help prevent lightning deaths or lifelong injuries. When the shuttle bus drivers met at the beginning of the summer tourist season, they were asked to provide the following safety alert when thunderstorms were in the forecast. *“There is a possibility of thunderstorms with lightning today. In case of a thunderstorm, remember: When Thunder Roars Go Indoors! If you hear thunder, get inside a building with electricity and plumbing or a hard-topped vehicle.”*

The park monitors storms and provides warnings on the radio. The camp hosts, visitor center staff, and duty rangers all receive a call when storm are in the area. In addition, back-country campers receive a copy of National Outdoor Leadership School/NWS Lightning-Risk Management for Back country Campers and Hikers brochure. Lightning safety is also included in CPR/AED and other safety classes for park staff.

The BRCA Visitor's Center displays a bright yellow When Thunder Roars Go Indoors sign at the front desk. The NEXRAD radar loop and the latest weather forecast plays on a large monitor. The park also posts lightning safety signs

at its shuttle bus stops. Finally, the park newspaper features lightning safety information. BRCA is proud to be a [Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador!](#)

**Aware**

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