



Aware

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Simon Property's 209 Malls Recognized as StormReady®/WRN Ambassadors™

By [Dave Tucek](#), WCM NWS Indianapolis, IN, [Chris Maier](#), National WCM Silver Spring, MD

Simon, a global leader in retail real estate, with the intent to increase shopper safety in the face of severe weather, has been awarded the designations of StormReady® or StormReady Supporters, and Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors™ for all of its 209 regional malls, The Mills and Premium Outlets. NWS Indianapolis, the closest office to Simon headquarters, presented the awards at a recognition ceremony June 24, at Circle Centre Mall in Indianapolis.

"Local NWS Offices will continue working with Simon Property Group, leveraging NWS StormReady guidelines, so all achieve full StormReady® recognition," said Dan McCarthy, Meteorologist-in-Charge at NWS Indianapolis. "This commitment helps expand our citizen's weather-hazards awareness and enhances NOAA's vision of building towards a Weather-Ready Nation."

Designations recognize these properties for their preparedness to handle all types of potentially life-threatening weather through communications infrastructure, community outreach, and hazardous weather training. Simon's first StormReady property was White Oaks Mall in Springfield, IL, recognized in 2009. The Simon Property Group is the first Real Estate Investment Trust to achieve both StormReady and Weather-Ready Ambassador recognitions.

"We are grateful to the National Weather Service for providing us with this distinction," said Tim Earnest, Executive Vice President of Mall Management for Simon Malls. "Our malls, The Mills and Premium Outlets play key roles in their surrounding communities, and the safety and security of area residents and visitors is of utmost importance. Leading by example, our hope is that other organizations that serve as community gathering places will follow suit."

Since the program's inception in 1999, more than 2,500 counties, communities, Indian nations, universities, government offices, military installations, and companies like Simon, have been recognized as StormReady.

"It is vital that businesses in the community are resilient to natural disasters and can recover quickly after an extreme weather event" said Douglas Hilderbrand, [Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador](#) Lead. "We welcome their contribution and look forward to deeper collaborations with Simon Property Group."



From left, Maria Prado, Simon Regional Vice President; Dan Kemble, Simon Security and EM; NWS MIC Dan McCarthy, Tim Earnest, Simon Executive Vice President; Russ Tuttle, Simon Senior Vice President and Chief Security Officer; and NWS WCM Dave Tucek, photo by Maria Weber, Simon Communications

Anniversary Screening Twister Movie Helps Keep People Prepared

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

Seattle Emergency Management (EM) partnered with WFO Seattle to hold a unique event in May, a 20th anniversary screening of the movie Twister. The special movie screening, supported by Warner Brothers and Universal Studios, was held at Seattle's Central Cinema during one of its "Dinner and a Disaster" movie showings.

The timing of Twister's debut in May 1996 helped raise the nation's knowledge of and preparedness level for tornadoes. The movie resulted in other tornado-related television programming, sparked greater interest in the SkyWarn weather spotter

program, and coincided with the completion of the nation's Doppler weather radar network. In addition, more people had video cameras documenting tornado events than ever before.

This special movie screening was sold out and included weather spotters, amateur radio volunteers, EM personnel, other weather enthusiasts and the general public. This theater also uses Hecklevision —a system that takes texts from smart phones and runs them on the movie screen during the film. In speaking about the event, theater manager Doug Willott said, "This was one of our best showings ever!"



Seattle's Central Cinema prepares for the 20th anniversary screening of the movie *Twister*.

Before to the screening, Seattle EM Matt Auflick and WFO Seattle WCM Ted Buehner offered some Washington tornado highlights and safety tips to the audience. Washington averages between one and two tornadoes per year. Most tornadoes have been quite weak, EF-0 or EF-1, going back to 1950. Yet 1997 had a record 14 tornadoes. The Evergreen State has also had three EF-3 tornadoes, including one on April 5, 1972, that struck Vancouver, killing six people and injuring several hundred as it plowed through a grocery store, bowling alley and an elementary school. Sadly, Washington led the nation in tornado deaths that year.

NWS Hydrologic Tool Helps Fill Gage Gap

By [Audrey Rubel](#), Regional Communications Manager, NWS Alaska Region



New iGage on bridge in Alaska.

Hydrologists at the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center (APRFC) in Anchorage have designed, developed and fielded a low cost, rapidly deployable, multi-purpose prototype hydrologic instrument. The new tool is yielding promising results in an area of the country where hydrologic, snowfall and coastal storm surge observations are scarce and critical. Since 1990, 23 of the 28 federal disaster declarations in Alaska included flooding as a cause.

There are serious data gaps in the state, but especially in river, snowfall and tidal information. The U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) has only one gage for every 6,085 square miles in Alaska. In comparison, the USGS operates one gage for every 339 square miles in the other 49 states. The nearly 2,000 mile long Yukon River is monitored by only three USGS gages.

Traditionally, NWS obtains additional river observations, beyond the USGS data, from state and federal agencies, as well as paid observers who manually measure river stage once each day. The iGage is low-cost, portable, rapidly deployable and easy to maintain. The iGage, compact and light (measuring just 5x7x3 inches), also provides reasonably accurate river stage information and is solar-powered, requiring no site power thus adding to its versatility and appeal in bush Alaska. The iGage's acoustic sensor measures the distance to the water.

Like any system, this one has limitations. Its accuracy is approximately 1 percent of the distance measured, so a sensor mounted on a bridge 20 feet above the river's surface would be accurate within 2.5 inches. While not precise enough to meet USGS standards, the gage does provide valuable river

stage information at locations that lack real time data, and at sites with only one daily observation. Meeting the USGS standard is expensive, but required at locations where river discharge is measured. For flood monitoring and forecasting, however, there are many locations that can benefit from a lower cost, albeit less accurate device.

Some of the systems benefits are also its weaknesses. For instance, the gage's use of solar power is a huge plus but its solar

batteries can fail during periods of low daylight and extreme cold, below -40 °F. In addition, the iGage requires a mounting platform so its acoustic sensor signal can reach the water's surface.

iGage deployment was part of the partnership between NWS Alaska and the [National Park Service](#), culminating in Denali National Park and Preserve becoming a [Weather-Ready Nation \(WRN\) Ambassador](#) in May of 2016. The iGage provided essential information during the 2014 Bering Sea storm season.

So far, 34 iGages have been deployed in Alaska and installation of five more is scheduled for this summer. Plans are underway to improve the accuracy by including an additional external air temperature sensor for better temperature compensation.

NWS Miami-South Florida helps Pompano Beach Send Off Lady Luck

By [Robert Garcia](#), Lead Forecaster; [David Dellinger](#), Port Meteorological Officer, NWS Miami, FL



The Lady Luck tanker just prior to its planned sinking just off shore of Pompano Beach, FL

Ever wonder what happens to retired ships after their years of service on the seas? For Lady Luck, a retired tanker, the future holds the promise of thrilling recreational divers as an artificial reef off Pompano Beach, FL. With local, regional and national media, dignitaries and the public all eager to catch a glimpse of Lady Luck's sinking on July 23, Pompano Beach EMs wanted to ensure the safety of the crowd of people expected to attend. The EM office asked NWS Miami for decision support services ahead of and during the event.

Staff at WFO Miami-South Florida provided a planning webinar 2 days ahead of the event to open lines of communication and enhance coordination between partners such as the Pompano Beach city manager's office and the Shipwreck Park Board. WFO staff also prepared daily email briefings to support the event

and provided a continuous weather watch when big day arrived.

Pompano Beach EM Kimberly Cristiano said, "The NWS team continued to provide timely weather updates going 'above and beyond' by having NOAA/NWS Port Meteorological Officer David Dellinger on site aboard one of our coordinating boats. Officer Dellinger left very early with our team and coordinated communications of real time weather updates that proved to be incredibly valuable as the afternoon's weather proved conducive for storm development."

For information and video of the sinking, see the [Lady Luck Sinking, Pompano Beach Video](#).

WFO Pittsburgh Takes Part in U.S. Open Championship Exercise

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

The Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Homeland Security (GOHS) recently led an exercise entitled "Sand Trap," which focused on the prevention and protection mission of GOHS. The exercise emphasized vulnerabilities and capabilities in conjunction with the U.S. Open Golf Championship held June 13-19 just east of Pittsburgh, PA. Warning Coordination Meteorologist Fred McMullen provided two weather scenarios to the nearly 100 participants from federal, state, local government, and first responders. The scenarios varied from a prolonged excessive heat episode during the U.S. Open Championship to a thunderstorm that developed east of the golf course and back-built over the venue. The NWS Pittsburgh staff briefed the Allegheny County EM Agency on June 15-16. The U.S. Golf Association used Thor Guard as their weather vendor to provide decisional input for delaying or suspending play.

These exercises successfully engaged state, local and federal law enforcement, and facility operations in various scenarios related to the protection of critical infrastructure/key resources and mass gatherings in the event of adversarial and terrorist related threats. It was vital to the security of events such as the U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club to ensure that all measures were in place to prevent and protect. The sharing of information, coordination, cooperation and collaboration of all critical partners were also essential to a well-coordinated approach to the threat, potential or actual, that may have resulted from current unrest throughout the world.

Hurricane Workshop Helps EMs Think Outside the “Category”

By [Barry Goldsmith](#), WCM, NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, TX,

On May 25, Mercedes, TX, hosted the 6th Annual Rio Grande Valley Emergency Management Partners Hurricane Workshop at its new Safe Room/Community Center. Nearly 100 representatives from a variety of organizations attended, including Mexican officials, U.S. Border Patrol, and numerous state and local transportation agencies.

The morning session reviewed the 2015 hurricane season and previewed 2016 as well as providing an update on NWS decision support products and services available for the upcoming season. The morning also highlighted results from the [First Faith-Based Integrated Warning Team Workshop](#) and benefits of social media to hurricane preparedness.

NWS Brownsville facilitated an exercise on potential impacts from rainfall, wind and storm surge to help participants consider how community readiness and evacuation decisions vary based on situations that do not follow the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale Category, including:

- ◆ Rainfall of more than 20 inches forecast from a tropical storm
- ◆ Storm surge water depth forecast from 3 to 9 feet from a large Category 1 hurricane headed for the mouth of the Rio Grande
- ◆ Wind from a Category 5 storm that slows down and rapidly decays from the coast to the large population in the McAllen metropolitan region in Hidalgo County

Attendees were split into three groups, and provided a one-page scenario that included a most likely forecast and safety margin forecast for each case. Decision-making notes were taken by one member of each breakout group.

The rainfall group, nearly 20 persons from Hidalgo and Cameron County organizations, had a healthy discussion on specific neighborhoods prone to life threatening flooding. Discussions focused on where to issue voluntary or mandatory neighborhood evacuation, local flood-safe sheltering options, and deployment of pumping vehicles and rescue watercraft. Health concerns were also discussed by the group, including flood recovery preparation.

The wind group discussed evacuation plans for high-profile vehicles and trailers in all areas, despite the expected wind decay after landfall.

The surge group, which included a sizable number of staff from the Port Isabel Immigration Detention Center, discussed the need for early and orderly evacuation of the facility, which is located in a greater than 6 feet of potential inundation area.

A common thread for each group’s discussion was the expectation for long-term recovery and potential need for federal (FEMA) assistance.

“Despite the dearth of tropical cyclone activity for the region since 2010, it was gratifying to see attendance at each event remain high in 2016,” said Goldsmith. “The energetic lunchtime breakout discussions that focused on *impact*, rather than *category*, were gratifying – particularly for the rainfall flood case. Rainfall flooding, perhaps the most critical regional impact, is not covered by the local hurricane evacuation study, which focuses on storm surge inundation and wind near the coast. To see core partners try to assess neighborhood level evacuation well inland will be critical should the practice case become real someday.”



NWS Forecaster Maria Torres was awarded Certificates of Appreciation for her work to support highly vulnerable Spanish speaking communities from Texas Department of Public Safety Region 3 and Disaster District 21, and the Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council, at the RGV EM Partners Hurricane Workshop.

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