



Aware

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Faith-Based Team Works to Protect Most Vulnerable Residents

By [Barry Goldsmith](#), WCM, NWS Brownsville, TX

Integrated Weather Teams (IWT) typically bring together a mix of NWS partners from emergency management (EM), media, and academia to strengthen relationships and improve methods to communicate consistent hazardous weather messages. NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley took the IWT concept to a new level.

Forecaster and Spanish Language Liaison Maria Torres suggested extending the Weather-Ready Nation concept where it matters most—near the most vulnerable, least resilient communities.

The Texas Rio Grande Valley is host to some of the most impoverished communities in the country; recent Census data showed that Brownsville's two largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas—Brownsville/Harlingen/San Benito and McAllen/Edinburg/Pharr—are among the five poorest in the nation.

Tens of thousands of residents live in substandard housing, many in *colonias*—unregulated settlements or subdivisions in semi-rural areas. Many residents live in dilapidated single-wide trailers that could be demolished in a strong wind.

Two common denominators among residents who live in the Rio Grande Valley are a devotion to family and membership in a Catholic or evangelical Christian church. Most residents speak only Spanish at home, and a sizeable number speak English “poorly” or “not at all.”

For these residents to understand the importance of becoming ready, responsive, and resilient to weather hazards, the information must come from a trusted source. Church leaders, from pastors and priests to lay leaders and fellow congregants, fit that qualification.

This first-of-its-kind IWT brought together core partners in EM, media, and academia with faith-based leaders, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and other non-profits to reach these vulnerable residents and to offer the potential for a nearby safe haven—a church or community resource center—in which to take refuge when a potentially destructive wind, hail or flooding event threatens.

Warning Coordination Meteorologist Barry Goldsmith described the structural issues with substandard housing in recent windstorms and provided inexpensive options to help *colonias* improve resilience. He then offered ideas on how local faith-based leaders could help their communities better prepare for hazardous weather, for instance, potentially opening a church *before* the storm as a safe refuge.

The event closed with a working lunch in which Linda Wasserman from Texas Impact, an advocacy organization that works closely with state VOADs to build capacity for resilience among religious organizations, and Anival Henrickson from the Texas Division of Emergency Management's Voluntary Agency Liaison office, talked about the importance of working together to help protect these most vulnerable residents from hazardous weather threats.



Maria Torres, Spanish Language Liaison at NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, and WCM Barry Goldsmith introduce the workshop to the audience. Photo courtesy of Texas Impact.

Lightning Drills Hit the Ground Running

By [Tanja Fransen](#), MIC, NWS Glasgow, MT

To kick off the Cal Ripkin age 9-12 year old baseball season, NWS Glasgow took the suggestion of FEMA Region 8 partners and held a lightning drill at the three season opener games. NWS Glasgow partnered with the Glasgow Umpires Association, a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador.

MIC Tanja Fransen and head umpire Curt Shipman explained the league's lightning safety policy and then had all the players—and parents—take part in a drill.

At the count of three, all you could see were young baseball players running for their vehicles where they waited 30 seconds (instead of the actual 30 minutes for a real event) and then returned to the dugouts to start their game. During games, the Glasgow Umpires use a variety of tools, from phone apps with lightning data, to a NOAA Weather Radio and calls to the NWS office, to decide whether to temporarily stop or to cancel a game.



Baseball team runs to vehicles during lightning drill.

Inaugural Intermountain West Aviation Weather Safety Workshop

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



NWS Aviation staff take part in roundtable. From left, Jeff Osiensky, Mike Bettwy, Noelle Runyan, and Scott Birch. Photo by Katy Branham.

was the role of impact-based decision support in aviation forecasting. Attendees praised the workshop and many asked when the next conference would take place.

In complex terrain, both weather forecasting and piloting planes is challenging. Mountains can generate their own weather, including turbulence, icing and obscurations. Meteorologists must take extreme care forecasting the weather so pilots have the info need to decide whether it is safe to fly.

To improve pilot safety, Sarah Rogowski, NWS Center Weather Service Office Salt Lake City, and Katy Branham, NWS Riverton, asked how they might be able to assist in keeping pilots safer. The two NWS Forecasters suggested holding an Intermountain West Aviation Weather Safety Workshop.

After months of planning and organizing, on May 6-7, NWS hosted a workshop that brought together 71 pilots and forecasters as well as aviation industry partners from Southwest Airlines, NetJets, and the U.S. Air Force.

Experts presented sessions on meteorological models, icing, mountain waves, Digital Aviation Services, and efforts made by private sector partners. A key theme of the workshop

NWS Supports Large Scale Coachella and Stagecoach Festivals

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

NWS San Diego provided onsite support to the California EMA for the 6 days of the Coachella and Stagecoach Festivals in April. The Coachella and Stagecoach Music and Arts Festivals, held outdoors, are the largest of their type in the nation, spanning three weekends. The events drew about 600,000 people to the Empire Polo Field



Wind damage at Coachella Festival on April 22, 2016. Photo Michelle Caldwell, Emergency Manager.

Grounds. Forecasters provided live weather briefings to multi-agencies gathered at the Incident Command Post in Indio, CA.

NWS San Diego meteorologists were on site from 9 am to 4 pm and provided formal briefings twice daily.

A final Stagecoach Festival is held at the same location on a third weekend with similar ICP participation. During the two weekends of 2016, forecasters and EMs were challenged by high winds impacting staging, performances and the safety of hundreds of guests staying in tents or watching the entertainment.

The forecasts verified well for both weekends. Onsite wind sensors recorded two episodes with gusts of 40 to 50 mph.

Double Event Draws Press to StormReady Ceremony and Hurricane Season Opener

By [Dan Noah](#), WCM, NWS Tampa Bay Area, FL

Scheduling Tampa’s StormReady ceremony to coincide with the first day of hurricane season really brought out the press. The ceremony highlighted Tampa’s commitment to protect all residents and visitors within the city. After hearing about the potential for long tracked violent tornadoes during last winter’s El Nino, EMs visited all 47 mobile home parks to discuss tornado safety and provided each park with a NOAA Weather Radio.

Each year, Tampa hosts one of the largest Hurricane Expo in the nation at its Museum of Science and Industry. The city is also a key player in exercises with Port Tampa Bay and the University of South Florida. In addition, NWS Tampa Bay promotes a Weather-Ready Nation each January during the Gasparilla Pirate Invasion, the third largest parade in the nation with more than 250,000 people lined up along both sides of the 3 mile long parade route.



From left, Dan Noah, NWS Tampa Bay; Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn; Brian LaMarre, NWS Tampa Bay; Tampa Fire Chief Tom Forward; and Chauncia Willis, Tampa Emergency Management. Photograph by Jason Penny, Tampa Fire Rescue.

Indy 500 Celebrates 100th Race, NWS on Hand for Lightning and Thunder Threat

By [Dave Tucek](#), WCM, NWS Indianapolis IN

Speedway, IN - As the famous call to “start your engines” marked the beginning of the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500, staff from NWS Indianapolis were on spot to help protect the record crowd record of 350,000 from weather hazards.

Race Day, May 29, marked the end of a month of heavy activity at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS): practices, the Grand Prix of Indianapolis, concerts and Indianapolis Mini-Marathon.

Throughout May, NWS Indianapolis staff sent daily weather briefings to federal/state/local officials preparing for race support at the Emergency Operations Center, highlighting hazardous weather threats, and possible impacts



The 100th running of the Indy 500 ran smoothly with behind-the-scenes weather help from NWS Indianapolis.

to public safety. Indiana Motor Speedway (IMS) safety officials were present, as well. As part of a DHS federal support plan, two meteorologists were assigned to provide on-site support during the race event. Additional support was provided remotely from WFO IND, Center Weather Service Unit Indianapolis and Central Region Headquarters.

The IMS is a StormReady supporter and WFO staff have worked with venue officials to ensure they have procedures in place to run a safe event.

NWS Indianapolis has provided on-site IDSS services during the Indianapolis 500 for 11 years. In addition, the IMS and NWS Indianapolis decided to become partners in ensuring venue preparedness and providing safety information to attendees, after the 2004 Indianapolis 500 Race, in which a severe thunderstorm

came to the area that eventually produced an F2 tornado that caused damage near the Speedway.

These preparedness services provided to the IMS and decision support services to the emergency management community continue to ensure overall readiness during high impact events.

WRN Ambassador Brings Lightning Protection to Haiti Orphanage

By [Kim Loehr](#), *Lightning Protection Institute Communications Director*

For years, [Haiti's St. Helene's](#) (NPFs) and orphanage, home to more than 400 children, many severely disabled, suffered repeated lightning strikes to its facility, which consists of 29 buildings on a 13-acre compound.

Located 5,000 ft. above sea level on the top of the highest point in the Kenscoff Mountains, the compound is especially vulnerable to severe thunderstorms, with frequent lightning posing serious safety concerns for the children. Thanks to an outpouring of national support, St. Helene's now has lightning protection systems to prevent further losses to critical electrical equipment, appliances, computers and lighting systems and, most importantly, to protect these vulnerable children.

In 2012 when the orphanage was struck by an especially severe thunderstorm, Gena Heraty, director of special needs programs at the orphanage, began researching what could be done to protect the children and the property. "I had heard people talk about lightning rods, but knew nothing about what they were or how they worked," said Heraty. "So when my Internet investigations found a nonprofit organization that actually responded to my chance email AND offered a solution, I was surprised and truly amazed!"

The [Lightning Protection Institute](#)



Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador the Lightning Protection Institute organized an effort to protect a vulnerable orphanage in Haiti from life-threatening lightning.

(LPI), a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador, responded to Heraty's email and quickly enlisted support from its partners at the Lightning Safety Alliance (LSA), and the NOAA Lightning Safety Awareness Team. From there, plans came together for a relief mission known as the "Building Lightning Safe Communities Haiti Project."

There were plenty of obstacles: terrain and site conditions, funding, tools and crew travel. When LPI developed plans, it was clear the success of the lightning protection mission would rely on donations of money, time and talent. Once LPI staff made the orphanage's situation known, there was an outpouring of donors and volunteers, dubbed the "Honor Roll of Haiti Project Sponsors," who donated the necessary funds, equipment and labor. Team facilitator, Jennifer Morgan, principal at ECLE, a Connecticut-based lightning protection equipment manufacturer, meticulously managed the Haiti project logistics. ECLE secured additional donations of relief supplies, clothing and other essential resources.

Years of planning concluded this past January when a team of 10 volunteers completed the most important phase of the project. In just 4 days, a "dream team" installed lightning protection systems for 26 buildings and structures on the compound. The team also provided essential grounding and surge protection and related electrical needs. A [YouTube video](#) captures the highlights of installation.

"Here in NPFS Haiti, we are very committed to what we are doing and are so grateful to everyone that helps us," explained Heraty. "I only wish I could look every single person that has helped us in the eye and shake their hands to have them feel just how much I appreciate their support!"

Mt. Rushmore Carves Out Time to be a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador

By [Dave Hintz](#), MIC, NWS Rapid City, SD

Mt. Rushmore National Memorial was recognized as a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador by NWS Rapid City in May. Local print and TV media were on hand for the presentation. When asked about the recognition, park Superintendent Cheryl Schreier stated "We already do many of the things that Ambassadors are asked to do."

According to Dave Hintz, Meteorologist in Charge at NWS Rapid City, "Given the amount of people that visit the memorial annually, and how closely we work with the park staff during hazardous weather situations, it was a natural fit to work with the memorial on this recognition." The NWS presented park staff with a certificate signed by Dr. Uccellini.

Since 2000, the memorial has averaged over 2 million visitors annually. In addition, the memorial has also been a NWS Cooperative Observing station for more than 50 years, which enhances the climate record in the Black Hills region.



From left, WCM Susan Sanders, Park Superintendent Cheryl Schreier, MIC Dave Hintz and Senior Forecaster Jeff Johnson.

Aware

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