



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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Feedback Wanted on Two Optional Hazard Maps for Weather.Gov

By [Eli Jacks](#), Chief, Forecast Services Division, Silver Spring, MD

NWS is asking for input on the first stage of its Hazard Simplification Project (Haz Simp) program. Over the past 2 years, NWS has investigated ways to simplify and clarify its weather and water hazards messages. Specifically, NWS is evaluating the clarity and effectiveness of its Watch, Warning and Advisory (WWA) system.

NWS is looking at the language used in these WWA messages to convey hazard timing, certainty and impacts as well as how well our graphics convey these messages.

Users can learn about these proposals at the [NWS Haz Simp website](#). This site contains links to surveys to collect feedback on proposed messaging options, as well as information on project history, details and reference sources.

NWS is asking for public feedback through a series of public comment opportunities. These proposals fall into one of two categories. The first category, WWA "Repairs," includes quicker changes involving minor adjustments to policy or software. The second category, WWA "Revamp," refers to changes that would require extensive coordination and major adjustments to policy and/or systems.

NWS is seeking your comments on two prototype, optional hazards maps that could be used on the [weather.gov](#) home page to "repair" some issues. The current hazards map on the NWS home page features 122 colors, one for each WWA hazard. Some users have commented that the map is confusing and cluttered when numerous weather events are occurring across the nation. The prototype maps are designed to address this issue. Based on public comment, one or both of these maps could be displayed as options on the weather.gov home page, in addition to the current WWA map.

You can use our [short survey](#) to provide comments and access more details on the map options. Live, automatically updated versions of these [map options](#) also are available.

There are no immediate plans for operational changes at this time; however, your comments will play a major role in any future decisions. NWS will announce additional comment opportunities via additional Public Information Notices and in *Aware*. NWS will add survey links to the Haz Simp website as they become available.



WFO Seattle Works with National Park to Keep Visitors Safe

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

The elevation of Mount Rainier, WA, (14,411 feet) and degree of glaciation makes it attractive to mountaineers from around the world. On average, about 10,000 people attempt the climb the peak each year, most between mid-May and early October. A majority of these climbers are not highly experienced mountaineers.

An additional 10,000 annual visitors backpack in the lower backcountry regions of the park. According to Stefan Lofgren, the park's chief climbing ranger, "On no other mountain in the United States are there so many people in technically glaciated terrain for so many days. This creates management responsibilities that the National Park Service (NPS) must address."

Each year, NPS conducts two to four dozen search and rescue operations, the majority related to climbing accidents.

Weather is often the primary cause of accidents. Winds of 40 mph are not uncommon at 10,000 feet or higher during the climbing season, making it difficult to move safely in alpine terrain and occasionally creating clouds that can reduce visibility to zero. When strong winds accompany precipitation, blizzard conditions can occur, posing extreme dangers.

In July, two NWS Seattle forecasters met with officials at the park to discuss how better to protect the public. NWS Seattle agreed to add a twice daily impact statement as part of its recreational forecast. Developed in collaboration with park rangers, this impact-based statement better informs visitors and climbers of risks so they can make better decisions about backpacking and climbing.

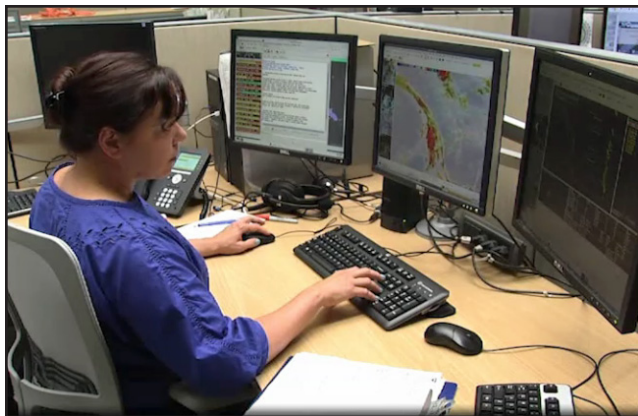
The new impacts statements explicitly detail what the weather will mean for people on the mountain, rather than leaving that interpretation up to the individual. For example, instead of simply stating the winds on the mountain will be 40 mph, the statement adds that climbers will need GPS for safe navigation, that it will be difficult to even set up their tents, and that they will be in dangerous blizzard-like conditions. NWS hopes these specific possible impacts will help users make a more realistic assessment about whether or not to set out on a climb or hike.



Climbing the Kautz, WA, ice chute

Meteorologists Support Firefighters' Efforts to Save Hundreds of Homes

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



NWS Meteorologist Kimberly Hoepfner working McHugh, AK, Wildfire

Impact-based Decision Support Service (IDSS) provided by WFO Anchorage meteorologists was instrumental in containing a fire in steep, rocky terrain on a hillside south of Anchorage, AK. This summer, the McHugh Fire threatened hundreds of homes and several thousand people in the middle of a spruce forest previously killed by bark beetles. Firefighters worked valiantly to protect the Alaska Railroad, power lines and keep the highway open for Alaska residents traveling to and from their homes past the fire.

Like many forecast offices around the country, NWS Anchorage responded to the wildfire with an increasing level of activity to meet Fire Management needs. When the McHugh Fire began, NWS Anchorage provided spot forecasts for the fire. As the fire developed, the office activated its Severe Weather Operations Plan and assigned a forecaster to work full time on the wildfire, using models, satellite imagery and weather instruments on the ground to forecast for the fire area and surrounding communities.

At the request of the [Alaska Interagency Coordination Center \(AICC\)](#), NWS Anchorage provided onsite support for the fire Incident Management Team. Onsite staff remained in constant contact with the NWS office and firefighters until the fire was under control.

NWS Anchorage frequently provides support for fires around the southern mainland of Alaska, following a similar tiered support plan; however, the proximity of the McHugh fire to the state's largest community raised public awareness and concern to high levels. As part of the increased services, NWS worked closely with local media and management officials to educate the public, including taking part in a two-part series about NWS fire support shown on local television. The interviews, combined with social media posts about the fire and smoke concerns, clarified the NWS role when the surrounding countryside goes up in flames.

NWS Bakes “Cookies” in Sun Oven

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

The last 10 days of July were well above average across Interior Northern California. In fact, much of July (18 days at Sacramento Executive Airport) experienced above average temperatures. But when the mercury threatened to surpass 100 degrees, NWS and its media partners took extra steps to make sure the public was prepared. NWS Sacramento sent a partner email the weekend before the arrival of 105 to 111°F temperatures to coordinate response.

NWS Sacramento WCM Michelle Mead and Sacramento County Office of Emergency Services Coordinator Mary Jo Flynn rolled out a new approach to alert the public about heat safety. Using Twitter’s live video streaming product, Periscope, the team baked cookies using just the California sun. The hashtag #Dashboardcookies bake spotlighted the effort.

Flynn began broadcasting at 8 am when she put her cookies on her car dashboard and sent out a broadcast message that NWS Sacramento would be joining later in the day to talk about heat safety. Between 2 pm and 5 pm, peak heat of the day, the team posted three joint broadcasts. The three periscope sessions had over 1,100 views, live and shared and helped get out the message about the importance of heat safety.



Turn Around Don't Drown Signs Put in Critical Locations

By [Vanessa Pearce](#), Meteorological Intern, NWS Wichita, KS

This summer, NWS Wichita, KS, staff presented Kingman County, KS, emergency management staff with two new “Turn Around Don’t Drown” road signs at the county’s Public Works headquarters in Kingman. The county is one of only two locales in Kansas to be awarded the signs through an NWS program for sites at extreme risk of flooding. “We are excited to be here,” said Janet Salazar, service hydrologist for the NWS Wichita office. “This is the first installation of these signs in Kansas through this program.” Salazar thanked Kingman County for its application, which cited an area near the city of Norwich that is extremely prone to road flooding despite mitigation efforts. In its application, Kingman County cited seven flooding incidents in this area since 2009, including at least one that involved a water rescue.

Salazar said the new signs will help grab the public’s attention in this area and hopefully guide drivers to steer their vehicles clear when there is flooding. The signs will replace older “Road May Flood” signs. Only 28 sites nationwide were chosen to receive signs. Barton County was the other Kansas recipient.

NWS is hoping to continue the program but sites are encouraged to purchase signs as well to ensure the safety of local residents. Find more information, see the [Turn Around Don’t Drown](#) website.



Turn Around Don't Drown sign in Kingman County, KS, before dangerous flooding point.

Aware

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