



# 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.

April 2019

## Emergency Services Recognized with StormReady Hero Award

By [Justin Pullin](#), General Forecaster, NWS Tallahassee, FL

NWS Tallahassee, FL, presented Joby Smith, Frankie Lumm, and Scott Warner of Bay County, FL, Emergency Services with the [StormReady](#)® Hero Award for their contributions to life-saving efforts before, during and after Major Hurricane Michael in October 2018.

Several days before landfall, Bay County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) staff, an NWS StormReady partner, declared a state of emergency, issued evacuation orders and activated its Emergency Operations Center (EOC), actions they had prepared for as a StormReady county.

EMA staff asked NWS Tallahassee to send a meteorologist to work at the EOC to assist with preparation and response decisions. In addition, NWS provided regular briefings and consultation on the severity and timing of hazards as Hurricane Michael rapidly intensified. The severity of the hurricane spurred EMA staff to request unconventional use of [Wireless Emergency Alerts](#) (WEA). Typically, WEA are short cell phone notifications of imminent hazards, such as tornadoes. In this case, the alert urged residents not heeding evacuation orders to flee coastal areas in the hours leading up to landfall.

In addition to the WEA, Bay County EMA staff pushed warning messages out through its Alert Bay emergency notification system, made phone calls, sent text messages and emails, and even went door to door in the most vulnerable areas. As a result of these exceptional efforts, approximately 210 of the 260 residents who originally chose to stay in their homes in Mexico Beach fled inland, limiting the county's direct death toll to 4.

The unconventional use of emergency messaging continued during the recovery phase because the hurricane had severely damaged the communications network. The EMA requested multiple statewide WEAs to inform at-risk residents where to find food, water and shelter, undoubtedly saving additional lives. Given Michael's historic strength, NWS felt these extraordinary efforts deserved this rare honor. NWS Southern Region Director Stephen Cooper helped present the award at a ceremony that included numerous state officials and local community leaders.

StormReady Hero Award recipients "demonstrate a clear and unambiguous evidence of proactive



From left, NWS Southern Region Director Stephen Cooper, Bay County Emergency Services Specialist and StormReady Hero Awardee Scott Warner, NWS Tallahassee Warning Coordination Meteorologist Mark Wool, Bay County Emergency Services Director & Fire Chief Mark Bowen, Bay County Emergency Management Specialist and Awardee Frankie Lumm, and NWS Meteorologist In Charge Tom Johnstone. Back row: NWS Meteorologist Justin Pullin, StormReady Hero Awardee Joby Smith, County Emergency Services Deputy Director Brad Monroe, County Commissioner District 3 Bill Dozier

actions beyond normal duties, resulting in lives saved in the impacted community.” These proactive actions include:

- ◆ Detecting the hazard
- ◆ Receiving NWS warnings
- ◆ Disseminating warnings to the at-risk community
- ◆ Convincing at-risk residents to take action

This Hero Award, first bestowed upon Van Wert County, OH, in 2002 has only been awarded eight times since StormReady’s inception.

---

## Free Training Video Helps Prevent Hot Car Deaths

By [Jan Null](#), CCM, Adjunct Professor of Meteorology, San Jose State University

Last year, 51 toddlers died because an adult left them locked in a car that overheated. These deaths occurred in almost every month of the year. A temperature as low as 70°F can rise to deadly levels in a short time. In addition to toddlers, an untold number of disabled adults also died locked in hot cars, and even more pets fell victim to this scourge.

To prevent these tragedies, the [National Safety Council](#) has just released a free 10-minute training module: [Children in Hot Cars](#). NWS encourages EMs and others to share the module link directly and through social media with friends, colleagues and the media. The more people that are aware of this issue, the more precious lives will be saved. This is great program for hospitals, day cares, adult care programs and similar organizations that work with new parents, disabled adults and pets.



---

## Spud Hog and Chili Cook-off Heat Up Winter Meeting



*More than 60 emergency managers, coordinators, planners and first responders attended the NWS Pocatello, ID, EM workshop and chili contest.*

By [Vern Preston](#), MIC, NWS Pocatello, ID

More than 60 emergency managers, coordinators, planners and first responders attended the NWS Pocatello ID, EM workshop and chili contest. The event offered a two-phased approach to reach Idaho Office of Emergency Management Area Field Officers: an exercise and a look at current conditions. The exercise featured a situational awareness and messaging session involving a winter storm incident.

The exercise scenario included heavy snowpack resulting from a winter storm that evolved from cold to warm when an atmospheric river impacted the area. NWS staff split the participants into two regions. Many participants took away ideas to strengthen their pre-storm preparations. NWS Pocatello Meteorologists Tim Axford, Kurt Buffalo, Alex DeSmet, John Keyes,

Nicole Peterson, Kevin Smith and Travis Wyatt led the development and helped participants during the scenario play.

After the exercise, NWS Pocatello Service Hydrologist Travis Wyatt provided a look at the current snowpack and the potential for spring flooding. Meteorologist In Charge Vern Preston offered an annual outlook from Idaho's version of Punxsutawney Phil – the Spud Hog. The Spud Hog saw his shadow, drawing groans from attendees. It was a long, cold, snowy, icy, winter across central and southeast Idaho.

After a question and answer period, the group was more than ready for the chili contest. Attendees were invited to bring in their best and most festive concoctions. Categories included:

- ◆ Most Creative
- ◆ Hottest and Spiciest
- ◆ Chili with Best Weather-Related Name
- ◆ Best Overall Chili



This year's most creative chili had meatballs, and the best weather name trophy went to "Polar Peril Chili." Despite the snowy weather several days leading up to the workshop, this partner event continues to be the premier partner gathering for NWS Pocatello.

---

## New Tsunami Guide to Enhance Awareness and Consistency of Messaging

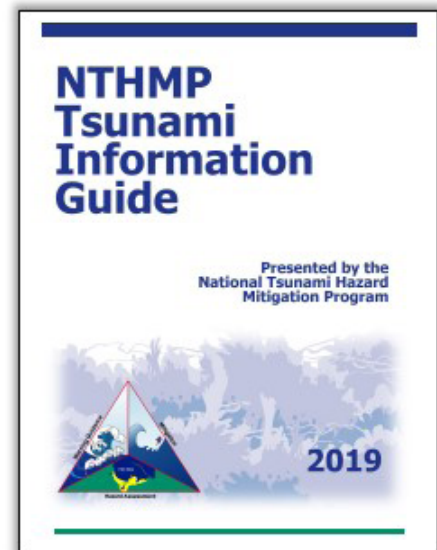
By [Christa Rabenold](#), *Mitigation Specialist, NWS Tsunami Service Program*

A tsunami can strike any coast at any time in any season. Tsunamis do not happen often, but they can devastate coastal communities. Since the beginning of the 20th century, 36 tsunami events have caused more than 500 deaths and approximately \$2 billion (2018 dollars) in damage to U.S. coastal states and territories.

To reduce the impact of tsunamis in the United States, the [National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program](#) (NTHMP) relies heavily on public education. To help further its mission, the NTHMP (which is led by NOAA and includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, and 28 U.S. states and territories) has released a new guide about tsunamis.

The 36-page [NTHMP Tsunami Information Guide](#) serves as a resource for information about the tsunami threat to U.S. coasts. It is written for anyone who wants to know more about tsunamis, the U.S. Tsunami Warning System, and how to prepare for tsunamis. Potential users include the public, the media, educators, community officials and public information officers in NTHMP partner agencies. The guide is organized into five sections:

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Tsunami Basics
- ◆ Tsunamis in the United States
- ◆ U.S. Tsunami Warning System
- ◆ Tsunami Safety



Appendices include historic tsunami information, key resources, and NTHMP partner contact information. The free guide is available for download on the [NTHMP website](#).

**Aware**

NOAA's National Weather Service, Analyze, Forecast and Support Office  
Managing Editor: [Melody Magnus](#), Editor: *Christa Rabenold*  
Aware online: [www.weather.gov/publications/aware](http://www.weather.gov/publications/aware) ISSN 1936-8178  
Subscribe/Unsubscribe: [melody.magnus@noaa.gov](mailto:melody.magnus@noaa.gov)

