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.

June 2013

From the Top

National Academy Study Good News for NWS

Dr. Louis Uccellini, NWS Director

Louis Uccellini, NWS Director

The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) released the results of it's congressionally-mandated study of the NWS. The study provides a baseline look at our operations and makes recommendations on how we can become the "Second to None" weather service the Nation needs.

The report is good news for the Weather Service. It validates the direction we described in the Strategic Plan and Weather-Ready Nation (WRN) Roadmap 2.0. The report also supports our work for improved Impact-Based Decision Support Services and outlines the need for an improved test and demonstration process.

NAPA gathered extensive input from internal and external NWS stakeholders. This report reinforces the need to place more emphasis on working with our partners to meet society's needs. Many of the study's recommendations already are being addressed, including realigning our budget structure and headquarters, and looking for efficiencies in our dissemination and telecommunication systems. The study also recommends strengthening collaboration with the NWS Employees Organization (NWSEO). I am committed to working with the NWSEO to ensure we build a strong and vibrant NWS for the future.

Finally, the study calls for NWS to establish a Federal Advisory Committee, essentially a formal venue for our stakeholders to be more actively involved. Such a committee is an option for supporting my commitment to an open, transparent approach to leading the NWS.

It's critical to work with our emergency management (EM) partners as we set our priorities. NAPA clearly identified the need for NWS to be more involved in decision support, more consistent in our products, and more open in our planning. I believe we can meet those needs and fully realize the vision of a resilient, Weather-Ready Nation that is truly "Second to None."

Dissemination News

FEMA Releases WEA PSA; Canada Offers Alerts

Mike Gerber, NWS New and Emerging Technologies Meteorologist

On May 30, FEMA and the Ad Council unveiled a 30 second Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Public Service Announcement (PSA). The PSA encourages, educates and empowers Americans to respond to WEAs and take steps to prepare for emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters. The PSA is available in English and Spanish on Ready.gov/Alerts.

Although WEA tones are audible during a portion of the PSA, broadcasters may play the PSA on air thanks to a 1-year limited waiver of FCC Section 11.45 rules. The waiver allows broadcast of the PSA "as part of a campaign designed to educate the public" about WEA since the PSA is "presenting the WEA Attention Signal in a non-misleading manner—that is, in a manner that does not mislead the listening or viewing public into erroneously concluding that an actual emergency message is being transmitted."

The Ad Council is helping FEMA distribute the PSAs to media outlets nationwide. They will air in advertising time and space donated by the media. See FEMA's press release for links to the PSAs and additional details.

FEMA encourages public safety officials to work with their local broadcasters to make this PSA a part of local public education campaigns by individualizing the tag line. Contact Ready.gov if you are interested in incorporating this and other products into local efforts to educate the public about emergency alerts.

The Canadian government also is looking into offering a WEA type program.

*From left, Amarillo EM Coordinator **Kevin Starbuck**, NWS Meteorologist-in-Charge **Jose Garcia**, Assistant EM Coordinator Dr. **Maribel Martinez**, Texas Tech Univ. Operations Manager **Wesley Burgett**, and NWS Science and Operations Officer **Todd Lindley**.*

New Mesonet Includes Fire Weather Sensors

Krissy Scotten, WCM, NWS Amarillo, TX

On June 3, NWS Forecast Offices in Amarillo and Lubbock, TX, along with the Amarillo city government and Texas Tech University installed the 75th West Texas Mesonet Station. Unique to this West Texas Mesonet Station is the addition of fire weather sensors that will help forecasters determine the meteorological conditions leading to high wildfire danger.

The West Texas Mesonet is an independent project started by Texas Tech University. The network's first mesonet weather data station was installed west of Lubbock in 2000. The network now covers 54 counties in western Texas and eastern New Mexico. The project's goal is to provide accurate meteorological data for distribution to a variety of organizations across the area including operational meteorology, agriculture and farming, research, and media.

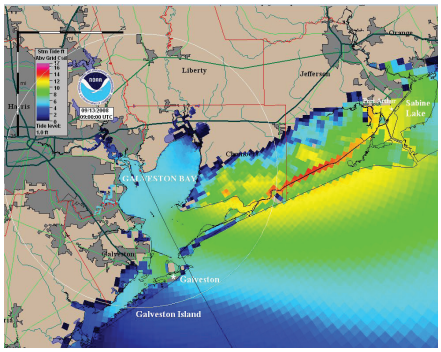
This Amarillo southeast station is the first of several West Texas Mesonet sites planned for installation in Amarillo and the immediate surrounding communities in Potter and Randall Counties.

NWS to End Unofficial Deterministic SLOSH Runs

John Kuhn, Meteorologist, NWS Marine and Coastal Services Branch

Effective June 1, the NWS National Hurricane Center (NHC) will no longer provide output from individual runs of the Sea, Lake, and Overland Flooding from Hurricanes (SLOSH) model during tropical cyclones.

SLOSH deterministic guidance was informally provided to some users over the past several years;



Deterministic SLOSH Model Run for Hurricane Ike on Sep 13, 2008

however, individual deterministic SLOSH runs often conflict with official NWS forecasts for storm surge and could be interpreted as being inconsistent with evacuation decisions from EMs.

For several years, NHC has been providing probabilistic storm surge products as part of a multiyear effort to improve storm surge communications. The NWS also is developing inundation graphics and a storm surge watch/warning.

A description of the current suite of operational, probabilistic storm surge guidance products is online.

NWS will continue providing an experimental suite of probabilistic storm surge products in 2013 that communicate inundation in terms of feet above ground. This information will be provided on an interactive Google Earth background map and as a static image.

Decision Support

Major Earthquake Exercise Tests Readiness

Logan Johnson, WCM, NWS Monterey, CA

First implemented by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2004, Golden Guardian, California's Annual Statewide Exercise Series, is now the most comprehensive state-level exercise in the country. Golden Guardian tests and assesses emergency operations plans, policies and procedures for all-hazards/

*From left, NWS Monterey WCM **Logan Johnson**, County Emergency Services Manager **Sherrie Collins**, Lead Forecaster **Charles Bell** in front of the situational awareness board.*

catastrophic incidents at the local, regional and state levels.

The 2013 theme was a major earthquake striking the San Francisco Bay Area. Team members took part in a functional exercise May 15, 2013, that included participants from coastal operational areas, tribal nations, state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners.

This year, several staff members from NWS Monterey, CA, took part in components of this large functional

exercise. WCM **Logan Johnson**, Forecaster/IMET **Matt Mehle**, and Lead Forecaster **Charles Bell** served as Technical Specialists in the Planning Section of the Monterey County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during the exercise.

Mehle also served as exercise evaluator. In that role, he was able to encourage other sections of the EOC to better communicate with the NWS throughout the course of the exercise.

Back at the WFO, Forecaster **Larry Smith**, Hydrologist **Mark Strudley**, and MIC **Kevin Baker** provided remote support.

These three filled spot forecast requests, including Hysplit runs, responded to NWS Chat messages from the EOC, and provided phone consultation regarding expected impacts and developed plans for response to exercise scenarios.

NWS office participation in multi-agency exercises strengthens relationships with core partner agencies and jurisdictions. In this case, NWS Monterey and participating agencies helped each other prepare for what could be a catastropic earthquake impacting more than California.

NWS Supports EMs During Boston Marathon Bombing

NWS News Staff, Silver Spring, MD

When two explosions tore through the crowd at the Boston Marathon on April 15, killing three people and wounding more than 260 others, the decision support services (DSS) team from NWS Boston was already onhand to help EMs, federal law enforcement officials and first responders.

The team, led by Forecaster **Rebecca Gould**, helped establish a dedicated DSS shift at the NWS Boston forecast office as well as onsite support to EMs centers when requested.

NWS Boston General Forecaster Stephanie Dunten, left, support the Boston Marathon effort.

In the months before the marathon, Gould, along with NWS MIC **Robert Thompson** and WCM **Glenn Field**, worked with the Massachusetts EMA to coordinate onsite DSS for the marathon. One of the DSS team members, Forecaster **Stephanie Dunten**, was assigned to work at the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) at Massachusetts EMA (MEMA) headquarters.

Early on Monday, April 15, Dunten arrived at the MEMA post in Framingham, MA. She analyzed current conditions and the near term forecast for the marathon route between Hopkinton and Boston. Before the first wave of runners set off, the MACC director held a briefing to make sure everyone knew their roles and the command structure to use if issues arose. Dunten then held a weather briefing for MACC staff. The forecast called for near-perfect conditions. Dunten held another weather briefing just before the elite men and charity runners started, but there were no changes from the previous forecast.

At 2:50 p.m., reports of at least two explosions came in. After receiving confirmation of the explosions, Dunten immediately contacted the DSS forecaster at NWS Boston and requested a Hysplit air dispersion model run, in case the explosions contained toxins or hazardous chemicals that could become airborne. She also sent a spot forecast request for the finish line site. After receiving the information from NWS Boston, Dunten quickly briefed the operations officer at the MACC. Fortunately no hazardous chemicals were released.

When NWS Boston had determined weather was not a major concern, Dunten volunteered to help in any other way. She was able to assist the MEMA public information officer by monitoring social media and MEMA's Webpage for information MACC needed. After several hours, MEMA determined NWS Boston could best support the effort to catch the bombers from its forecast office.

NWS Boston was ready for an emergency of this magnitude. The events that occurred at the finish line of the Boston Marathon showed how agencies at a variety of levels can work together in a time of crisis.

Outreach Updates

Helping Faith Groups Prepare for the Worst

Rick Shanklin, WCM, NWS Paducah, KY

In the last couple of years, in support of the Weather-Ready Nation initiative, the Kentucky Weather Preparedness Committee's (KWPC) Western Division has been targeting improved preparedness at faith based institutions. The committee identified the faith based sector as generally less prepared for tornado and other hazardous weather events than most locations where large groups regularly gather.

A key part of this outreach program was to develop a repository of outreach material, severe weather preparedness handouts, response plans, and a suite of audio PSAs. The committee established a Website where the public can download the materials as well as an easy to use Four Step Process of Preparation. See www.fullyprepared.com for details.

As a result of this focused initiative, numerous churches in western Kentucky and nearby regions have developed and implemented severe weather response plans.

The Pathway Baptist Church in Calvert City, KY, put its new plan in action on Sunday, April 28, during the morning service, by conducting a tornado drill. People took shelter in pre-designated locations. The drill went smoothly; church ushers had all occupants sheltered within a couple of minutes!

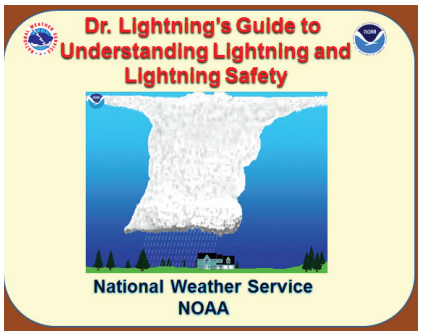
KWPC's mission is to educate and prepare every Kentuckian for potentially life-threatening weather events and consequences. The group includes representatives from NWS, emergency management, transportation, utilities, health services, law enforcement, academia and the media.

Dr. Lightning's Animated Books Now Available

By John Jensenius, NWS Lightning Safety Service Expert

A new feature on NOAA's lightning safety Website is the addition of Dr. Lightning's Guides To Understanding Lightning and Lightning Safety.

The guides are actually PowerPoint shows designed to look like



books. Each book uses pictures and animated graphics to help children and adults understand lightning and its associated dangers.

There are four books in this series:

- An Introduction: Gives basic information on lightning and provides an introduction to the topics covered in the other three books
- Safety: explains why people are struck by lightning, what they can do to be safe, and what can be done to protect their homes
- Science: explains how thunderstorms develop and become charged, and all about lightning
- Victims: explains how people are struck and gives statistical information on lightning fatalities

All the books are downloadable and can be used in the classroom or at home.

In addition, in preparation for Lightning Safety Week, June 23-29 an NWS lightning safety team, led by Program Analyst **Donna Franklin** and supported by **John Jensenius** and Webmaster **Melody Magnus,** revamped the lightning safety Website.

Major changes include an extensive new science section also featuring animations. Check out the new site soon.

NWS Strengthen Coast Guard Connection

NWS News Staff, Silver Spring, MD

The U.S. Coast Guard station in Eastport, ME, faces some unique challenges in its mission. The station's jurisdiction includes portions of the Gulf of Maine, the Bay of Fundy and Passamaquoddy Bay. These waters generate tide differences of up to 20 feet, currents which average 6-8 knots, and the largest natural whirlpool in the Western Hemisphere. Harsh winters bring frequent gale and storm conditions.

WCM **Noelle Runyan** and MIC **Rich Okulski** of NWS Caribou, ME, visited the station in late May and met with Station Chief **Austin Olmstead**. Olmstead praised the

*WCM **Noelle Runyan** and USCG Station Chief **Austin Olmstead** on 25 foot search and rescue boat.*

NWS office for their high impact PowerPoint briefings.

These briefings, provided to public safety officiails before and during high impact events, help safeguard Coast Guard members and their boats. Olmstead also requested the Caribou office use site-specific spot forecasts for search and rescue missions, one-third of which occur in Canadian waters. The U.S. Coast Guard station in Eastport is much closer to these waters than the Canadian Coast Guard, and can thus respond more quickly.

Chief Olmstead invited NWS Caribou to take part in two international exercises in June and September. These exercises will allow NWS Caribou to practice impact decision support services, strengthen existing relationships, and build new ones.

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