



# 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.*

**May 2014**

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## **From the Top: Building a Weather-Ready Nation One Ambassador at a Time**

By Christopher Strager, Acting OCWWS Director; and [Douglas Hilderbrand](#), WRN Ambassador Lead

Within NOAA, building a Weather-Ready Nation (WRN) not only means delivering better forecasts and warnings—timing, intensity and expected impacts—but also making forecasts and warnings easier to understand and act on for stakeholders such as emergency managers (EM) and, more broadly, for the public.

NOAA's goal is to reduce weather-related fatalities and improve the economic value of weather, water, and climate information; however, we can't build a Weather-Ready Nation alone. That's why in early February 2014, NOAA launched the Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador initiative.

This WRN initiative is NOAA's commitment to working with all kinds of organizations to make our country ready, responsive and resilient to extreme events. WRN Ambassadors are raising the bar by helping NOAA generate and deliver valuable lifesaving information. Ambassadors also are taking a leadership role within their respective communities and engaging their stakeholders to be "ready, responsive and resilient."

As of mid-May, there were more than 300 WRN Ambassadors, representing a wide range of organizations from Fortune 500 companies to small mom-and-pop stores, from federal agencies to local fire and police departments. The diversity of the organizations applying to become WRN Ambassadors has exceeded our expectations. And WRN Ambassadors are successfully taking ownership, as the name implies, and actively engaging their stakeholders.

A great example of this proactive stance was the WRN Atlanta Town Hall convened by a few local WRN Ambassadors in response to the late January snowstorm that paralyzed the city. The Town Hall meeting brought together the NWS local Weather Forecast Office, EMs, city and state leaders, and other WRN Ambassadors such as The Weather Channel. This ad hoc team discussed ways to improve operations so that Atlanta can be more weather ready when the next severe weather event threatens. The team came up with recommendations they then provided to the Georgia Governor's Office. Learn more about the [Weather-Ready Nation initiative](#) at our website.



*Chris Strager, Acting  
OCWWS Director*

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## **News and Updates: Changes to SPC Convective Outlooks Proposed**

By [John Ferree](#), NWS Severe Storms Service Leader; [Bill Bunting](#), SPC Operations Branch Chief; Liz Leitman, SPC Forecaster

The Storm Prediction Center (SPC) is proposing to expand the number of risk categories on its heavily used Day 1-3 convective outlooks from 3 to 5 categories. SPC will also clarify the risk level now labeled as "SEE TEXT." SPC also is proposing to add another risk threshold to its Day 4-8 Convective Outlook graphics.

The Day 1-3 Convective Outlook text products often contain discussions of areas of potential severe weather, but the risks are not quite high enough to define a slight risk of severe weather. To reflect this potential, forecasters place the words "SEE TEXT," which refers users to the SPC text product. The SPC is proposing to change the vague "SEE TEXT" areas to specifically delineated regions labelled "MARGINAL."

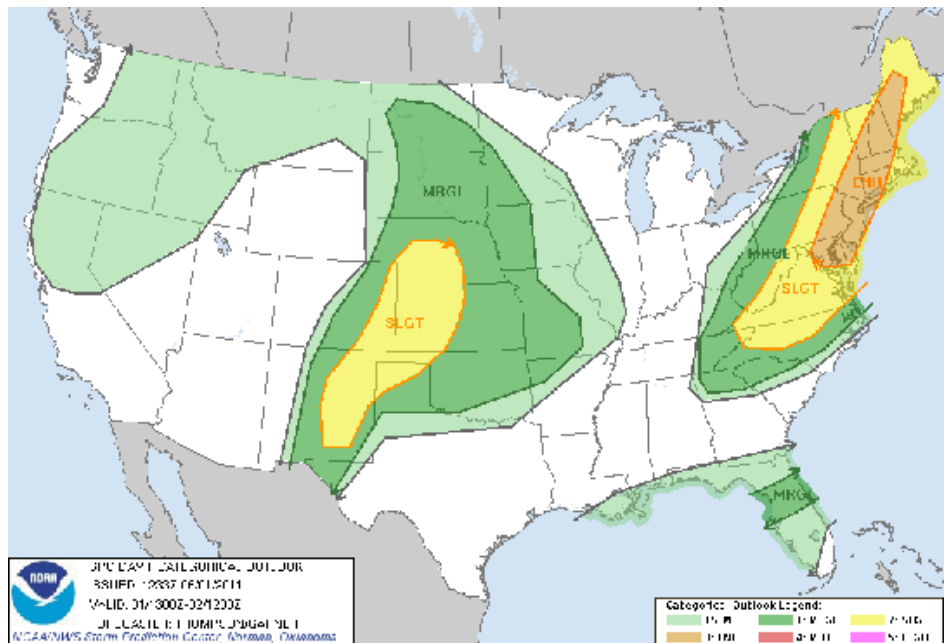
Most severe risks fall in the current "SLIGHT" category. The SPC is proposing using a new category when the probabilities of severe convection are in the upper end of the current Slight Risk category but below the threshold for Moderate Risk. This in between area would be labelled "ENHANCED," short for Enhanced Slight Risk. The new category will help to distinguish between lower-impact events and some higher-end isolated events that currently

are covered under the broad umbrella of Slight Risk. SPC's well-established Moderate Risk and High Risk thresholds will remain essentially unchanged. You can see the [sample graphics online](#) showing the proposed changes. SPC is accepting comments on this proposal through June 17, 2014 via a [short online survey](#).

SPC also is proposing to change it Day 4-8 Convective Outlook graphics to add information to the extended range severe weather forecasts. This change would better describe risk to partners and the public.

Traditionally, SPC denotes a severe area in the Day 4-8 time frame when it determines there is a 30 percent total severe threshold. That threshold will be retained, and another probability, 15 percent, will be added for areas in which organized severe weather is possible. Adding the 15 percent threshold should result in more consistency between the Day 4-8 graphic and corresponding text discussion, allowing SPC to communicate threats sooner.

SPC is seeking your comments on the proposed SPC Day 4-8 Outlook through June 17, 2014. The survey on the proposed change and a detailed explanation of the change is on the [SPC site](#).



Proposed new SPC 1-3 day outlook. [More sample graphics are on the SPC website.](#)

## News and Updates: NWS Seeks Comments on EM Decision Support Document

By [Wendy Levine](#), NWS Office of Strategic Planning



NWS New York, N.Y., forecaster Ashlie Sears provides decision support to an EM at the New Jersey State Police Emergency Operations Center at Met life Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J.

The [NWS Roadmap 2.0](#) is focused on building a Weather-Ready Nation, which means building community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather. NWS is enhancing its decision support services, improving technology to track and forecast storms, and expanding its dissemination efforts to achieve far-reaching national preparedness.

NWS defines Impact-based Decision Support Services (IDSS) as “the provision of relevant information and interpretative services to enable core partners’ decisions when weather, water or climate has a direct impact on the protection of lives and livelihoods.”

Core partner is defined as government and non-government entities directly involved in the preparation, dissemination and discussions involving hazardous weather or other emergency information put out by the NWS. The term includes EMs, government partners and the media.

To implement the WRN Roadmap, NWS has launched WRN Pilot Projects with focused IDSS activi-

ties at several forecast offices. In addition, through ongoing prototype activities, many other NWS offices are exploring new ways to provide decision support services.

NWS policy requires the agency to seek public comment and review before implementing new or substantially modified products or services. To address NWS enhancements to IDSS, we will be providing a series of Service Description Documents (SDDs) describing who we plan to provide IDSS to and what types of decisions we plan to support.

NWS has recently developed a SDD describing its proposed IDSS support for EMs and other government core partners for events and incidents impacting the safety of life and property. This SDD is a revision of an earlier version of the document NWS made available for comment from May 24 to September 23, 2013. The document was revised based on comments received and on stakeholder interactions early in 2014. The [revised SDD](#) is online now. NWS is accepting comments on this document through August 31, 2014 at: [nws.idss.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:nws.idss.comments@noaa.gov)

In addition to other stakeholders, NWS is particularly interested in receiving comments from EMs. Please let us know if the revised SDD accurately describes the level of service NWS should be providing to EMs and other government core partners.

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## Decision Support: Front Lines of an Aviation Accident

By [Geoff Bogorad](#), NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, TX

The NWS WFO Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley Aviation Team, Forecaster Blair Scholl and Senior Forecaster Geoff Bogorad, played a pivotal role in the Brownsville/South Padre Island International Airport's triennial accident drill. The NWS was invited to take part in this year's drill, which involved more than 12 different first responders from local, state, and federal government agencies and more than 50 students from a local high school, who role-played the injured passengers.

The airplane accident scenario was a crash landing of a 50 passenger Mexican commuter jet and crew. The NWS role was to inject a weather situation, unknown to the field responders, during the emergency response. A call was received by NWS meteorologists around 10:30 am informing them of the accident. By 11:00 am, the Aviation Team was at the Incident Command Post (ICP) briefing the commander about a line of thunderstorms expected to approach the airfield. Emergency personnel sprang into action to remove the injured and have everyone on the airfield seek shelter until the all clear was given by NWS personnel.

During the afternoon debrief, the Aviation Team recommended airport management and local responders work more closely with the NWS since there was some miscommunication on the initial contact. NWS staff suggested constant radar/weather surveillance and communication to the ICP via hand-held radio, telephone, and social media and on-site meteorologist at the command post.

The exercise was successful and provided the NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley Aviation Team an inside look of how an Incident Command Post is operated during an emergency. All parties involved felt the exercise improved communication, strengthened partnerships, and provided the needed tools to learn procedures used for life saving measures during an aviation emergency. This exercise also tested the WFO's procedures for an aviation accident.

"In a real aviation incident, weather can be your best friend or worse enemy. Our goal was to show how NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley stands ready to help keep decision makers informed and first responders safe during the recovery phase," said Bogorad.





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## Outreach Innovation: Electronic Billboards Add to Tornado Safety Arsenal

By [Richard Smith](#), WCM, NWS Norman, OK

NWS offices in Tulsa and Norman, OK, took part in a news conference called by Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin on May 1, 2014. The conference announced several severe weather initiatives undertaken by the state since last May's devastating tornado outbreak. The preparedness initiatives are designed to make Oklahomans more weather ready.

Among the initiatives Gov. Fallin discussed was the release of a coordinated set of tornado safety guidelines put together by the Governor's Task Force on Weather Safety, a group made up of all the chief TV meteorologists in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa markets, as well as leadership from the NWS forecast offices in Tulsa and Norman.

Last May's tornadoes again highlighted the importance of having a consistent, unified message for tornado safety. The Task Force developed guidelines offering simple tornado sheltering and safety advice. Adopting the Task Force guidelines represents a significant accomplishment and a success for the Integrated Warning Team efforts in the state.

Governor Fallin also announced a new partnership between Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management and Lamar Advertising, which operates 25 electronic highway billboards in the OKC metro area and 21 in the Tulsa area. NWS will coordinate with state emergency management to determine the need for special messaging on the billboards. Electronic billboards will be a valuable new tool to reach vulnerable motorists with alerts about developing severe weather threats.



*David Andra, Meteorologist in Charge (MIC), WFO Norman, discusses the tornado safety guidelines developed by the Oklahoma Governor's Task Force on Weather Safety. Also pictured is Governor Mary Fallin; Director the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management Albert Ashwood, MIC Steve Piltz, NWS Tulsa, and representatives from partner organizations*

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## Outreach Innovation: NWS Increases Spanish Outreach Efforts

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

While some NWS offices have several fluent Spanish speakers on staff, many others have none. In response to a growing numbers of Spanish-speaking constituents in communities across the country, NWS staff have developed a way to share materials to serve Spanish speaking residents.

NWS staff from several forecast offices developed a new Spanish Outreach Sharing Site, which continues to grow rapidly. The site is only open to NOAA employees at this time. Features of the site include an archive of translated materials, a Spanish Outreach Log, and request forms for posting questions and requests for translation assistance. Future plans include featuring best practices and helpful guidelines for offices interested in establishing and enhancing their Spanish language outreach and media programs.

Materials that have already been added include information for weather awareness weeks to promote preparedness and weather readiness in our nation's Spanish-speaking population, including presentations, videos, brochures and even Public Service Announcements. Every year, more and more Spanish speaking outreach is required. Sharing across offices and regional boundaries is a great way to help ensure NWS is providing a higher level of service to our Spanish speaking population.



**Aware**

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