Aware

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Wireless Emergency Alerts Saves Lives in Louisiana

*By **Charlie Woodrum**, WCM, NWS Lakes Shreveport, LA*

On Halloween night, Jamie and Donnie Munson were settled into their double-wide mobile home for the night in Trout, LA. Little did they know, their lives were about to change forever. Just after 8 pm, a Tornado Watch was issued until 4 am the next morning. Although it looked like the tornado threat was diminishing, NWS Shreveport Senior Meteorologist Jason Hansford was closely watching a tornado warned discrete cell that had developed in front of the line in Rapides Parish. As the storm neared WFO Shreveport's area, it continued to show strong rotation and even a debris ball on the Fort Polk, LA, radar, prompting Jason to issue a Tornado Warning at 11:51 pm that night.

The remnants of the Munson's mobile home after a tornado destroyed it. The family was safety away thanks to a WEA warning. Photo, NWS Shreveport WCM Charlie Woodrum.

When NWS issued the warning, Jamie's mobile phone instantly alerted her via a Wireless Emergency Alert. Jamie got online immediately and saw the storm was moving through Pineville and knew given its northeast motion, this movement would put the storm on a path very close to their home. Then Jamie saw a post about the tornado threat from the LaSalle Parish Emergency Manager on social media. This second alert convinced her the threat was real, prompting her and her husband to quickly move to the house of a family member nearby. About 10 minutes after they left, an EF-2 tornado ripped through Trout, LA.

Jamie and Donnie stayed the night with family. In the morning, they drove home to find their mobile home flipped over and thrown, completely destroyed with all of their life's possessions lying in rubble. All that remained of their home were the stairs to the entrance, now leading to an empty foundation.

It was their quick action after getting the Wireless Emergency Alert that likely saved their lives. Losing all their possessions was hard but they are thankful to still be alive today!

"Weather technology and the alert system has come a long way. We are getting the alerts in time to be able to relay to our people in plenty of time to save lives. The alerts on the storm saved at least 20 lives that I know of in LaSalle Parish. You can't put a price tag on that." Scott Franklin, Sheriff/Emergency Manager, LaSalle Parish, LA.

Silver Jackets Group Targets Consistency and Resiliency

*By **Brandon Bigelbach**, Meteorologist, NWS Glasgow, MT*

Silver Jackets are a team of federal, state and local government officials and floodplain managers who work together to reduce flood risk and preserve the natural environment of floodplains. In late October, meteorologists from NWS Glasgow, MT, and the NWS Great Falls, MT, Senior Service Hydrologist from took part in the annual Montana Silver Jackets meeting in Helena, MT.

Silver Jackets group meets in Helena, MT, October 2018.

In addition to updating each other on programs, the group examines best practices and approaches for communication of flood risk and community resilience to stakeholders. One area identified for future collaboration was how team members discuss flooding and flood risk. The group felt the terminology was not consistent from one agency to the other, potentially confusing the public.

Another major focus of the meeting was resiliency. The session centered around developing of an application or web page that would let users customize natural hazard risk information for their location. This online option might include recommendations for preparedness and increasing resiliency for events most likely to prove hazardous to the user's location.

A third focus revolved around early results from a series of summits held across the state as a part of the Montana Resilient Community Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to identify what community gatekeepers across the state feel are underlying stress factors for their community. This project also seeks to determine what types of hazardous events or shocks are priorities in a community so these events could be addressed to increase the community's resiliency.

A rather prominent theme this year was post-wildfire debris flows and flooding, and the potential risk posed to Montana communities. The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has multiple outreach workshops planned in 2019 for communities across the state to help raise awareness to this ever-increasing threat.

NWS Charleston, SC, Tests New Social Media Platforms During Hurricane Florence

*By **Robert Bright**, General Forecaster, **Neil Dixon**, Senior Forecaster, NWS Charleston, SC; **Christina Speciale**, Meteorologist Intern, NWS Albany, NY*

NWS Charleston, SC, is a test office for Facebook Live and Periscope video applications. These platforms were used several times during Hurricane Florence to provide live briefings and show a weather balloon launch. The office's two main goals were to explain which impacts were the most concerning and to help control the "message." Charleston staff conducted the briefings daily from September 11–14 leading up to the start of the hurricane's impact on the area. To help minimize preparation time, staff modified partner briefings to better suit its social media audience.

Screen capture of Hurricane Florence live feed for social media.

There were several positives that resulted from these briefings, including many comments thanking us for taking the time to explain the hazards and potential impacts. Some people also provided useful feedback that helped us improve subsequent briefings. The main challenges we faced were low audio and difficulty accessing Facebook Live on our office iPad compared to the office iPhone. The briefings also required two people to conduct the recordings, one for each platform.

Multiple Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors™ helped us reach a larger audience by sharing our broadcasts on their social media platforms. The most successful Facebook Live post was viewed 6,500+ times, had a reach of 14,100+ and had 300+ reactions, comments and shares. The most successful Periscope post was viewed ~47,000 times. In total, these posts were viewed more than 86,100 times with a Facebook reach of ~44,000 and ~150,000 Twitter impressions. We hope to be able to provide this service for future significant weather threats.

Impact Decision Support Become Focus of NWS Winter Weather Meeting

*By **Rick Shanklin**, WCM, NWS West Paducah, KY*

Winter Weather Workshop Organizer and NWS Forecaster Christine Wielgos discusses preparedness for extreme winter weather events at a November workshop in Kentucky.

Impact-Based Decision support is changing the agenda of NWS partner meetings. NWS Paducah, KY, completed a road tour of four winter weather workshops in early December. The workshops, which drew over 160 people, included presentations on such topics as extreme winter weather preparation, forecasting in the modern era, 100 year flood events, CoCoRAHS, severe weather climatology and a review of past winter storms.

The workshop concluded with the winter weather outlook. In addition, the workshops included presentations from local TV meteorologists on various winter season topics. The events included a total of 10 different speakers. NWS conducted a workshop in each of the four states served by WFO Paducah, KY: Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri and Indiana. Ironically the Evansville, IN workshop had to be rescheduled from its original November 15 date due to a winter storm!

The workshops received consistent positive feedback for the spectrum of practical topics and the inclusion of NWS partners among the speakers. The strategically placed workshops within the NWS Paducah county warning area helped to maximize the total attendance while also allowing each session to include locally appropriate topics. Early in 2019, NWS use of Facebook Live and Periscope will be expanded to additional offices and provided as an experimental service.

Investigating the NWS Forensic Services Program

*By **Lora Wilson**, NWS Forensic Services Program Lead*

Did you know that the NWS has a forensics program? Most people think of TV shows like NCIS and CSI when they hear the word forensics, not a government office. The NWS Forensic Services Program supports NWS investigation, litigation and archiving processes. Most days, the NWS Forensic Services Program Lead supports other federal agencies by responding to data retrieval requests for investigations and lawsuits. This work requires close coordination with staff at the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), in the NWS Observation office and across other service programs to provide the needed data.

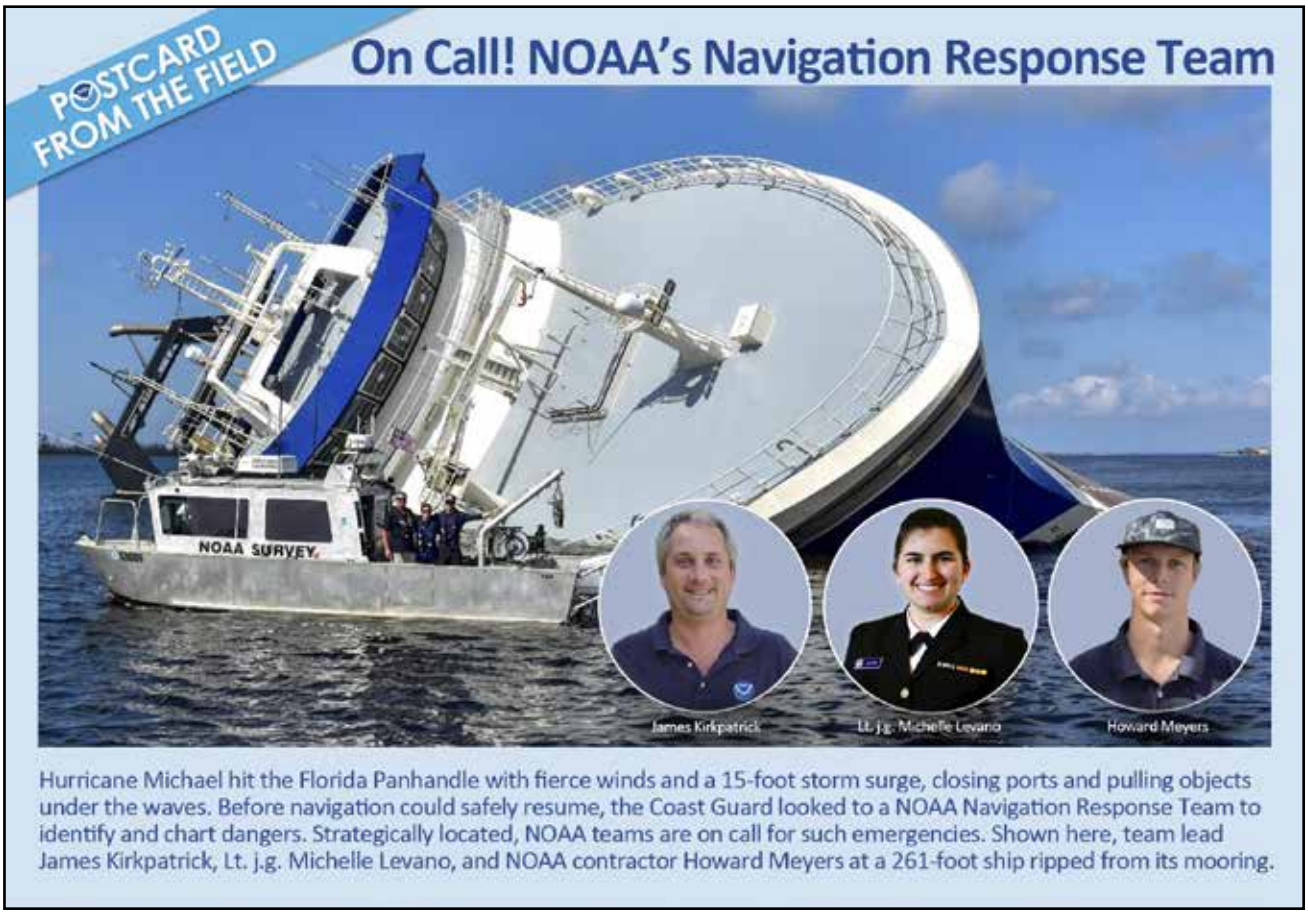
NWS Forensics is also asked to take part in investigations. Usually, these cases are handled in conjunction with other agencies such as the National Transportation Safety Board, U.S. Coast Guard and state agencies. When another agency makes a request, the Forensics Lead works with the appropriate regions or centers to identify key staff that can support the effort.

For litigation issues, federal attorneys will come to Department of Commerce and NOAA General Counsel (GC) offices requesting assistance with weather-related matters. GCs will then turn to the Forensics Lead to get the necessary data and help with plain-language meteorological interpretation.

As with all programs in the NWS, there are policy directives to ensure the program is being run responsibly and consistently. The following are the directives that drive the forensics program:

- NWS Policy Directive 10-20 - Forensic Services
- NWS Instruction 10-2003 - Records Retention
- NWS Instruction 10-2005 - Handling and Releasing Accident-Related Weather Information
- NWS Instruction 10-2006 - The Accident Investigation/Litigation Process
- NWS Instruction 10-1603 - Operational Readiness and Significant Event Reporting

The NWS Forensic Services Program is part of the NWS Aviation and Space Weather Services Branch and is led by Lora Wilson.



Hurricane Michael hit the Florida Panhandle with fierce winds and a 15-foot storm surge, closing ports and pulling objects under the waves. Before navigation could safely resume, the Coast Guard looked to a NOAA Navigation Response Team to identify and chart dangers. Strategically located, NOAA teams are on call for such emergencies. Shown here, team lead James Kirkpatrick, Lt. j.g. Michelle Levano, and NOAA Contractor Howard Meyers at a 261-foot ship ripped from its mooring.

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