Building Weather Ready Nations - The New International Need

Dr. Louis W. Uccellini
Director, National Weather Service
NOAA Assistant Administrator for Weather Services

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Budapest, Hungary
Outline

• Background

• Why the urgency for change?

• Building a Weather-Ready Nation

• So how are we doing?

• Building Weather Ready Nations (WRNs)
Background
MISSION

Provide weather, water, and climate data, forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy.
NWS Operations
Community Based Services
Seamless Suite of Forecasts From Mesoscale to S2S
Increasingly Based on Multi-Model Ensembles

Forecast Lead Time

- Minutes
- Hours
- Days
- Weeks
- Months
- Seasons
- Years

Forecast Uncertainty

Spanning Weather and Climate

- North American Multi-Model Ensemble
- North American Ensemble Forecast System
- Global Ensemble Forecast System
- Global Forecast System • Global Dust
- Short-Range Ensemble Forecast • Wave Ensemble
- North American Mesoscale • Space Weather Prediction Models
- Fire Wx • Regional Hurricane • Real Time Ocean Forecasts
- Rapid Refresh/HRRR/HRRE • SSEO (Storm Scale Ensemble of Opportunity)
- Dispersion (smoke)

Benefits

- Life & Property
- Aviation
- Maritime
- Fire Weather
- Emergency Mgmt
- Commerce
- Energy Planning
- Hydropower
- Reservoir Control
- Agriculture
- Recreation
- Ecosystem
- Health
- Environment

Warnings & Alert Coordination

Outlook

Guidance

Threats Assessments

Forecasts

Watches

Coordination

Minutes

Hours

Days

1 Week

2 Week

Years

Seasons

Months
Why the Urgency for Change
Global Risks Landscape
World Economic Forum Davos 2018
Increasing Societal Vulnerability to Environmental Hazards

Factors contributing to increased vulnerabilities

- Increasing population in vulnerable areas
- More infrastructure at risk to extreme events
- Signs of climate change
  - Sea-level rise
  - Increasing extreme precipitation events
  - Record monthly temperatures

4 out of 5 Americans live in counties that have been declared weather-related disaster areas in the past six years*

Meanwhile we are now predicting extreme events out to a week in advance!

*Source: Environment America
2017: 16-billion dollar events
Totaling 306 billion in damages - a U.S. record

U.S. 2017 Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters

- North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana Drought: Spring–Fall 2017
- Western Wildfires, California Firestorm: Summer–Fall 2017
- California Flooding: February 8–22
- Colorado Hail Storm and Central Severe Weather: May 8–11
- Midwest Severe Weather: June 27–29
- Midwest Severe Weather: June 12–16
- South/Southeast Severe Weather: March 26–28
- Minnesota Hail Storm and Upper Midwest Severe Weather: June 9–11
- Midwest Tornado Outbreak: March 6–8
- Central/Southeast Tornado Outbreak: February 28–March 1
- Missouri and Arkansas Flooding and Central Severe Weather: April 25–May 7
- Southeast Freeze: March 14–16
- Southern Tornado Outbreak and Western Storms: January 20–22
- Hurricane Harvey: August 25–31
- Hurricane Irma: September 6–12
- Hurricane Maria: September 19–21

This map denotes the approximate location for each of the 16 billion-dollar weather and climate disasters that impacted the United States during 2017.
Comparing Severe Weather Outbreaks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>April 3-4, 1974</th>
<th>April 27-28, 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Super Outbreak</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Summary:</strong></td>
<td>150 tornadoes across 13 states</td>
<td>~200 tornadoes across 16 states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number and Strength:</strong></td>
<td>6 F-5 tornadoes, 24 F-4</td>
<td>4 EF-5 tornadoes, 11 EF-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tornado Track Length:</strong></td>
<td>2500 miles</td>
<td>2500 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tornado Time:</strong></td>
<td>50 hours</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outbreak forecast:</strong></td>
<td>“Indications” provided night before</td>
<td>4-6 days prior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Warning lead time:</strong></td>
<td>~24 minutes</td>
<td>~24 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fatalities:</strong></td>
<td>316</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building a Weather Ready Nation: “A Vital Conversation”
December 2011 Workshop in Norman, OK

• Focus on the “last mile”: delivery of warnings
• Assess and update warning dissemination strategy
• Integrate social and physical science
  – Is the message delivered equal to the message received?
  – Impact-based Forecast and Warnings for a wide range of decision makers (from ‘organized’ to ‘loosely coupled’ to ‘individuals’)
• Improved outreach and education
“First, it should be understood that forecasts possess no intrinsic value. They acquire value through their ability to influence the decisions made by users of the forecasts.”

“What is a Good Forecast? An Essay on the Nature of Goodness in Weather Forecasting”
– by Allan H. Murphy; Weather and Forecasting (June 1993)
Building a Weather-Ready Nation
Becoming a Weather-Ready Nation is about building community resiliency in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather, water and climate events.

Touching every county every day.
Supporting national security and public safety.

“Ready, Responsive, Resilient”

Better forecasts and warnings
Consistent products and services
Actionable environmental intelligence
Connecting forecasts to decisions

Involves the entire US Weather, Water and Climate Enterprise WORKING TOGETHER

We have 8200+ WRN Ambassadors
Becoming a Weather-Ready Nation Relies on the NWS Connecting Forecasts to Decisions Based on Impact-Based Decision Support

Generating forecasts and warnings + Connecting those forecasts/warnings with partner decision-making process = Realizing Intrinsic Value and Mission Success

“Ready, Responsive, Resilient”

The best hydrometeorological forecasting in the world

Practice, practice, practice!

Develop relationships / know partner needs

Embed

Trust

Impact-based Decision Support Services
Impact-Based Decision Support Services

• Now authorized by **Federal Law**:

The 2017 Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act authorized the NWS to address “increasing IDSS needs...at the Federal, State, local, Tribal Nations...” “within current resources”

• Recent review shows that 94% of IDSS provided at local levels for all service areas - demands sustained local presence.
The Complexity of supporting decision processes in the United States that save lives and property

• We have rediscovered Alexis de Tocqueville (1835):
  – “The Europeans accustomed to finding a functionary* always at hand to interfere with all he undertakes...reconciles himself with difficulty to the complex mechanisms of the administration of the townships...in the United States.”
  – de Tocqueville referring to his discovery that nearly all the decisions for the public welfare/safety in the United States are made at local levels – town halls – not the states – not the federal (central) government!

* From the national/central government
As we have found with WRN – not much has changed

Rhode Island: “Storm Ready State” celebration
39 Townships Make The Decisions (February 2, 2018)

NWS has committed itself to serving the “complex mechanism” of local decision makers who save lives
So how are we doing?
Post Christmas Storm (Dec. 25-28, 2015): The Spectrum of IDSS

**Preparedness**

**Federal and State Actions**
- Increased level of coordination across federal, state and local jurisdictions before, during, and after the event
- Maintained situational awareness through NWS and liaison briefings (as early as Dec 22)
- Alerted response teams and assets for possible activation or deployment (over holiday weekend)

**Immediate Response**

**Tornadoes**
- Federal, state, local mobilized for widespread impact
- WFO Fort Worth made preliminary tornado tracks working with SR-ROC and liaisons;
- FEMA analyzed impacts to support activation and deployment decisions

**Blizzard**
- State and local municipalities mobilized to address road conditions, open shelters, on call for emergencies

**Flooding**
- Emergency Response Specialist (ERS) deployed to FEMA VII Regional Response Coordination Center
- NWS embeds with state EOCs, with FEMA, highlighted greatest flood risk to support staging operations over large domain

**States of Emergency Declared**
- Dec 27: TX/NM/MO; Dec 28: OK; Dec 29: IL; Dec 30: MS/LA
Post Christmas Storm (Dec. 25-28, 2015): The Spectrum of IDSS

Response and Recovery

**Long-Duration River Flooding**

- NOAA Liaison provided location and timing of peak crests along affected rivers:
  - to help FEMA and states define when NOAA and interagency remote sensing capabilities should be executed
  - imagery captured real-time visual impacts during worst conditions to support NWS RFC operations as well as inform disaster declaration (recovery) decisions
- NWS Central and Southern Regions worked closely with FEMA Regions and States to define the events for declaration requests
- Central Region ROC continues to provide IDSS for debris removal operations in southern Missouri
“I want to first fully thank the dedicated professionals here at the National Weather Service for providing us with the most updated forecast briefing this afternoon and for their continued hard work as part of the effort to protect lives and property. Folks here are incredibly professional. We rely on them, and they don't let us down. We tremendously appreciate, especially over the holidays, how they're always there and always helpful, doing the best they can to help law enforcement and others.”

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon following the 2015 December Holiday storm and January 2016 Flooding
### January 2016 Blizzard & Coastal Storm: Connecting All of the Pieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 15 - 18</th>
<th>Jan 19</th>
<th>Jan 20</th>
<th>Jan 21</th>
<th>Jan 22</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium range products begin identifying snowstorm threat for the end of next week</td>
<td>Confidence increasing</td>
<td><strong>Partner Coordination/Briefings</strong></td>
<td>Fed./state/local govts make critical decisions <strong>before</strong> the snow begins</td>
<td>Snow begins in the Mid-Atlantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NWS offices begin briefing partners on potential storm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Partner Coordination/Briefings</strong></td>
<td>Blizzard Watches Issued</td>
<td><strong>Blizzard Watches Issued</strong></td>
<td><strong>Snow forecast adjusted to include NYC in Blizzard Warning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media interviews</td>
<td>Media interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Map of the United States showing snowfall areas" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Map of the United States showing snowfall areas" /></td>
<td>State of Emergency Declared:</td>
<td>Schools/Govt Close Roads Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• North Carolina</td>
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<td>• Virginia</td>
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<td>• West Virginia</td>
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<td>• District of Columbia</td>
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<td>• New York</td>
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</table>

1 pm: Press Briefing
Connecting All the Pieces

The Past

2013 Snowstorm

Long Island Expressway
With NWS Decision Support

Pennsylvania Turnpike
Without NWS Decision Support

2016 Snowstorm
2017 East New Orleans Tornado

- NWS local outreach and preparedness activities over a 4-year period
- Deep relationships with Emergency Managers/WRN Ambassadors
- Dissemination of forecasts and warnings
- Public awareness
  - Daytime event, visual confirmation, schools sheltered
- Collaborative forecast preparations within NWS and the larger enterprise a success
  - Over 100 meetings and table-top exercises held in the city in the year preceding event
- IDSS provided days in advance of the tornado

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>February 7, 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strength:</td>
<td>EF-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track Width:</td>
<td>1/3 mile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tornado Track Length:</td>
<td>10 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warning lead time:</td>
<td>~33 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date: February 7, 2017
Strength: EF-3
Track Width: 1/3 mile
Tornado Track Length: 10 miles
Warning lead time: ~33 minutes
Injuries: 33
Fatalities: 0
GOES-16 (Engineering Check-Out in 2017)
Harvey Rapid Intensification
“The breadth and intensity of this rainfall are beyond anything experienced before and catastrophic flooding is now underway and expected to continue for days. 50 inches will be possible by end of the week.”

- WPC Forecast Discussion
• Flood inundation maps based on NWM forecast using 5-day quantitative precipitation forecast

• Texas Department of Emergency Management needed information on existing and maximum possible flood extent

• Maps supported emergency management efforts to stage supplies in non-flooded areas and to target relief efforts
Models predicted Irma becoming a hurricane before the tropical depression formed in the eastern Atlantic.

NWS indicated threat for southeastern U.S. 8-10 days in advance.

Sharp right turn to the north was expected based on strong ensemble agreement.

- Exact turn with regard to the FL peninsula was uncertain; but confidence was high enough to alert Southeast U.S. and focus on Florida.

Florida Governor declared a State of Emergency on Monday, six and a half days before landfall.

- Forecast for the right turn verified!
Forecasts and Impact Decision Support Services (IDSS)

Maria

✓ Track forecasts for Maria were very accurate
  • GFS had the best track forecast stats
  • Intensity forecasts proved challenging

✓ 5, 4, 3 .... day forecasts had Maria tracking over Puerto Rico
  • Strong winds and heavy rainfall were the main threat
  • IDSS --> 5 days in advance

✓ Email briefings every 3 hours with partners 3 days in advance of landfall in Puerto Rico
  • Briefings to FAA and military to coordinate evacuations

✓ IDSS provided during the extended recovery phase
Forecasting Improvements Over the Past 25 Years

Andrew 1992

- Policy: Global models not used for official forecast
- GFS did capture an “L” with one or two closed isobars - considered a success!
- Policy changed after Andrew

Katrina 2005

- Accelerated use of models for 5-day forecasts
- Model runs captured intensification/track - broad “cone of uncertainty”
- Intensity changes advertised 1-2 days in advance – still a major challenge

Irma 2017

- 10-day model runs used to track Irma:
  - development of storm as a wave exited Africa
  - right turn in the track predicted as storm approached Florida
- Still have issues nailing down the details
  - Small track changes approaching Florida
  - Rapid intensity changes

Brian Norcross
Impact Based Decision Support Services Improvements

Andrew 1992

- NHC connected with National/State EMs
- FEMA/National Recovery assets not prepositioned
- Slow to react to natural disasters
- National response tempo took 4 days AFTER LANDFALL to recognize impact and then rise up to meet the challenges

Katrina 2005

- NHC connection with National/State EMs expanded
- Variable connectivity with local, state/parish EM community
- National pre-coordination of response was problematic in some states
- Recovery, supplies overwhelmed

Harvey/Irma/Maria 2017

- Entire NWS connected to National, State, Local Emergency and Water Resource Managers
- Strong connection (embedding) at every government level, especially at the local level
- All hands on deck to support field structure before, during, and after events –NWS surges resources where needed!!
- Ready-Set-Go with EM community 7 days in advance of landfall
- CONSISTENT messaging of forecasts and impacts to all partners
**Impact Based Decision Support**

*Days Prior to Landfall*

|                              | HARVEY  
|------------------------------|---------|
|                              | AUG 17 – SEPT 1 | IRMA  
|                              | AUG 30 – SEPT 12 | MARIA  
|                              | SEPT 16 – SEPT 20 |
| External Partner Engagements: Briefings to Emergency Managers | 7 | 11 | 5 |
| Embedded with Emergency Operation Centers | 7 | 6 | 3 |
| “All Hands on Deck” – Internal Staffing Surge to Effected Offices | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| Internal Collaboration Calls (Centers, WFO, RFC, CWSU) | 4 | 5 | 4 |

**US Deaths:**

- **Harvey:** 88
- **Irma:** 97
- **Maria:** >2900* (estimated and predominately post-storm)
How do we Measure Success?

One of the bigger challenges for those who hold us accountable to realize the intrinsic value of our forecasts and warnings is how we measure success (economic, societal, reduced deaths/injuries) and document increased preparedness.

“Partnership with the NWS has revolutionized the EM community from one that reacts to events to one that proactively prepares and stays ahead of extreme events.” - Eric Waage

Director of Emergency Management, Hennepin County Minnesota
Northern Plains Winter Weather Workshop, November 2016
Florida’s unusually long red tide is killing wildlife, tourism and businesses

Red tide in Florida and Texas produces a toxin that can have harmful effects for marine life. For people, the toxin can become airborne and cause respiratory issues and eye irritation. These symptoms can be more severe for people with serious respiratory issues such as asthma.

Ecological Predictions by NOS IDSS Provided Through Local NWS WFOs

Dead fish line the beaches of Panama City. Photo: Randy Robinson
Weather Ready Nations (WRNs) Pilot Program

- IDSS is viable and useful for all countries
- NWS develops pilots with USAID/OFDA and encourages participation from other WMO Members
- WRNs pilots (2-3 years each) share IDSS lessons learned and best practices
- 6 WRNs pilot projects: El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Barbados, S. Africa, Indonesia (w/Met Office)
- Upcoming: Croatia (September 2018) and Sri Lanka (January 2019)
Weather Ready Nations
The Weather Ready Nations (WRNs) demonstration projects, supported by USAID/OFDA and NOAA, represent a paradigm shift in how we think about weather forecasting. We are:

Moving from just what the weather will be
• 6 inches of rain
• 40 mph winds

To also include what the weather will do
• Roads flooded
• Communities cut off
• Power lines down

Disaster managers and traditional weather forecasting agencies must work closely together to create an impact-based forecast.

Disaster management agencies contain detailed geographic spatial information on the vulnerabilities of local communities. These agencies traditionally lead in the warning of communities at risk.

Forecasters using the latest science based weather predictions decide on the likelihood of an impact, and together with disaster managers decide on an appropriate warning level according to the risk matrix.

Risk Matrix

The Process

- Disaster Managers and Forecasting Weather Agencies jointly develop hazard matrices (thunderstorm, snow).
- Forecasters compile science based weather predictions.
- Disaster management agencies provide detailed geographic spatial information on the potential for human and economic losses.
- Forecasters decide on the likelihood level and together with disaster managers agree on an appropriate warning level according to the risk matrix.
- Forecasters and Disaster managers coordinate to issue a warning.
- Disaster Managers and Forecaster coordinate to monitor progress and share situation reports.
Summary

• The US NWS is leading the US Weather, Water, Climate Enterprise in Building a Weather-Ready Nation (BWRN) and now involving 8200+ WRN Ambassadors and organizations across the U.S.

• We are now moving beyond the forecast and warning -- connecting these to decision makers at the Federal, State, Local and Tribal Nation.

• Building a Weather-Ready Nation and providing increased IDSS and the Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Nation level authorized by the Weather Act that was signed into law in April, 2017.

• Initial successful outcomes -- effective life and property saving decisions have energized the NWS workforce and all core partners. Demand for IDSS continues to increase across all service areas.

• Changing the nature of the workforce includes Earth System Science & Social Science

• Spreading the Gospel! With USAID, OFDA and WMO members, 6 Pilot Projects to Build Weather Ready Nations (WRNs) are currently underway, with 2 more in development.
Thank You