



RGV Hurricane Season 2017 Preparedness Kicks into Gear Hundreds of Partners, Public Served in May and early June

Despite the Rio Grande Valley seeing no direct tropical cyclone strikes since September 2010, interest remained high for preparedness and awareness activities during late spring 2017. The following are three highlights of the season.

Rio Grande Valley Emergency Management and Media Partner Workshops

On May 24th, the City of Mercedes Safe Room and Community Center hosted the 7th Annual RGV Emergency Management Partners Hurricane Workshop. For the sixth straight year, more than 100 core partners including Emergency Management Coordinators and public safety officials from a variety of Emergency Support Functions including public health, education, transportation, first response (police and fire), and border security learned about the latest information streams provided by the National Hurricane Center and NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley, a review of Hurricane Beulah – Then and Now on the 50th (Golden) Anniversary year of Hurricane Beulah, which was the overall theme of the 2017 workshop. The highlight of the meeting was a panel session with around eight public safety officials who described how they plan for evacuation of inland residents from rainfall flooding – a hazard that is not included in hurricane evacuation studies (HES) that are based on storm surge inundation and a small component of peak wind and wind decay. Refreshments and coffee were provided prior to the meeting.

On May 25th, a similar workshop was held with nearly 30 local broadcast, print, and web media partners at KGBT CBS-4 News in Harlingen. The theme was also Hurricane Beulah, Then and Now – but the date of the meeting coincided with the official press conference of the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane season, and these partners were treated to a live audio session to begin the workshop, shortly after 10 AM Central Time. After the review of the NWS information streams and an overview of Beulah, the smaller group was provided scenarios that dealt with inland flooding, storm surge flooding, and destructive winds and asked to discuss and describe how

they would communicate the threats, far beyond the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, to their audiences. A morning snack and lunch were provided to all participants.

For each event, Science and Operations Officer **Joshua Schroeder** conducted the workshop, assisted by Tropical Program Manager **Geoffrey Bogorad**, Information Technology Officer **Pablo Gonzalez**, and Meteorologists **Matt Brady** and **Chris Birchfield**.

Rio Grande Valley Ready Expo

On June 3rd, a private-public coalition hosted the First Annual Hurricane Ready Expo at South Texas College in Weslaco – located in the heart of the Rio Grande Valley. The coalition, led by the Urban Science Initiative and assisted by South Texas College with subject matter expertise provided by Warning Coordination Meteorologist **Barry Goldsmith** drew several hundred visitors. The NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley full convention booth, which included videos of Hurricane Katrina’s storm surge as well as the life-size tornado chamber. **Goldsmith** spoke to about 40 people as one of the keynote auditorium speakers on Hurricane Beulah – then and Now, and fielded a few questions on the topic as well as the opportunity for audience members to share their stories from 1967.



“For another preparedness season, NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley was there to help decision makers of all stripes understand the hazards and impacts from hurricanes striking in or near the region,” said Goldsmith. “Despite not having even an indirect impact since September 2010, the Golden Anniversary of Beulah offered the opportunity for long-time residents to share their stories about difficult times, particularly from the widespread flooding, in 1967 – with the hope that younger generations will understand the threat to life and property a similar storm would be in 2017 or in any year.”