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# The Coastal Breeze

Official Newsletter of  
National Weather Service - Brownsville, TX

## The 2013 Atlantic Hurricane Season: A Failure to Launch

By Barry Goldsmith, Warning Coordination Meteorologist

Amid much fan-fare, a busy season was forecast by NOAA (and nearly every forecasting organization) for the Atlantic Basin, which includes much of the North Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. By the time the season officially ended in November, 13 cyclones were observed, with only 2 hurricanes. No major hurricanes were seen. Only Tropical Storm Andrea made land-fall in the United States. These numbers were well below pre-season predictions. Why?



**Above:** Visible satellite photo of Tropical Storm Dorian over the tropical Atlantic Basin, July 25, 2013. Notice the abundant dry air surrounding the small core. Dry air was a persistent theme through the entire season.

While many of the factors that normally lead to an active hurricane season were prevalent, atmospheric wind shear and dry air dominated the summer and early autumn. This neutralized most development in the Atlantic and Gulf Basins.

### 2013 SEASON AT-A-GLANCE

Tropical Storm	Hurricane	Major Hurricane
NAME	DATES	PEAK WIND [mph]
Andrea	June 5-7	65
Barry	June 17-20	45
Chantal	July 7-10	65
Dorian	July 23-August 3	60
Erin	August 15-18	45
Fernand	August 25-26	60
Gabrielle	September 4-13	65
Humberto	September 8-19	90
Ingrid	September 12-17	85
Jerry	September 29-October 3	50
Karen	October 3-6	65
Lorenzo	October 21-24	50
Melissa	November 18-22	65

More detailed information can be found on [NHC's webpage](#)

Even Hurricane Ingrid, whose outer bands produced helpful rain for the Valley, formed too far south to become a force. Why did all these factors come together to effectively "kill" the Atlantic season? Future studies may shed some light. We may never know why so many localized events, which were virtually unpredictable months in advance, reduced the 2013 season to a shadow. More information on how the "puzzle pieces" *didn't* fit together to produce an active season can be found on [our website](#).

## Weather Highlights and Climate Records for 2013

By Geoff Bogorad, Senior Forecaster

Here are highlights of notable weather events from around the Rio Grande Valley and Deep South Texas for 2013. Follow the links below for full summaries.

### FEBRUARY

- [Where did winter go?](#) The 2012-13 winter season was mild and dry. Brownsville, Harlingen, and McAllen did not report a daytime high below 65° in February. Rainfall was scant, with Harlingen only reporting 0.20 in., with just 0.01 in. reported at both Brownsville and McAllen. Weather elements of note were wind and low relative humidity, with these elements reaching their most extreme values on February 25.

### MARCH

- [Bone Dry](#) There was no cool down in March. The drought worsened and temperatures soared. The heat peaked on March 18, when Brownsville, Harlingen, and McAllen each broke maximum temperature records.

### APRIL

- [Cooler Temperatures](#) April was not as hot as March, as a series of cold fronts tempered normally hot mid-spring conditions.
- [Much-Needed Rain](#) It took a while, but substantial rain finally fell at the end of April. It came with a price, as a line of strong to severe storms moved through the Mid- and Lower Valley during the afternoon of April 28, bringing damaging winds as high as 53 mph at the Port Isabel Airport and power outages to many Valley residents.

### JUNE

- [Microburst "Visits" Weslaco](#) An afternoon seabreeze combined with an old cold front to produce a cluster of strong storms. Damage resulted as the storms moved through Willacy, Hidalgo, and western Cameron Counties. Approximately \$100,000 in damage occurred.
- [Early Summer Heat](#) June and the beginning of summer ushered in a slew of record high temperatures. Drought conditions worsened with a lack of rain. Harlingen set an all-time monthly record when the mercury topped out at 106° on June 29. High temperatures were not far behind at Brownsville and McAllen, where daily records of 102° and 104° were reported, respectively.

### SEPTEMBER

- [A Break in the Drought](#) Rain finally came, and it arrived in deluges. Over a foot of rain fell in portions of Cameron County during the month. Traditionally, September is the Valley's wettest month.



**Above:** Damage to a warehouse along Business Highway 83 and South Utah Avenue on the east side of Weslaco, June 2, 2013.

## Weather Highlights and Climate Records for 2013 (continued)



**Above:** Photo of street flooding just after rains ended near downtown Brownsville, between 4 and 5 PM on November 6, 2013.

Photo courtesy of the City of Brownsville

### NOVEMBER

- **Flash Flooding in Brownsville** When four inches of rain falls in an hour, flash flooding is usually the result. The west side of Brownsville was on the receiving end of this deluge on November 6. The combination of an approaching cold front, and upper-level disturbance, and sufficient atmospheric moisture converged with a weak afternoon sea breeze to cause torrential rain. Streets, several cars, and some businesses were inundated with water.

- **Prolonged Cold Spell and Flash Flooding in Harlingen** The last November when there were 3 consecutive days of high temperatures in the 40s was in 1976. Just prior to Thanksgiving, an arctic cold front brought an early and extended cold snap to all of Deep South Texas. The “Blue Norther” initiated a cluster of strong thunderstorms which produced torrential rain. Harlingen received 5 to 6 inches of rain in a 2 to 3 hour period, which resulted in widespread urban flooding.

City (Year Records Started)	Record High Temperature	Record Low Temperature	Lowest High Temperature	Highest Low Temperature	Record Daily Rainfall [in.]
<b>Brownsville</b>	Feb. 7: 85°	Apr. 24: 52°	Apr. 25: 68°	Jan. 12: 72°	Jan. 2: 0.57
(1878)	Mar. 18: 99°	May 4: 51°		Jan. 28: 71°	Apr. 28: 2.65
	Jun. 29: 102°			Apr. 17: 76°	Nov. 22: 1.26
	Nov. 20: 88°			Oct. 30: 78°	Dec. 30: 2.39
<b>Harlingen</b>	Mar. 18: 98°	Apr. 19: 50°	Apr. 19: 70°	Jan. 29: 72°	Apr. 28: 2.37
(1911)*	Jun. 29: 106°	Apr. 20: 49°	Oct. 17: 70°	Mar. 22: 72°	Sep. 13: 2.41
			Nov. 25: 46°	Apr. 17: 77°	Nov. 22: 4.75
				Oct. 30: 77°	Dec. 30: 2.48
<b>McAllen</b>	Feb. 10: 96°	Apr. 20: 46°	May 12: 73°	Jan. 28: 72°	Sep. 6: 0.78
(1941)**	Mar. 18: 100°		Oct. 17: 69°	Jan. 29: 72°	Nov. 6: 0.64
	Mar. 23: 102°		Nov. 25: 48°	Mar. 22: 73°	Nov. 22: 1.95
	Jun. 29: 104°			Apr. 17: 77°	Dec. 30: 1.73
	Aug. 6: 106°			Aug. 8: 81°	
	Nov. 21: 91°			Sep. 27: 78°	
				Oct. 29: 79°	
				Oct. 30: 78°	
				Oct. 31: 78°	

\*Records based on data from Harlingen/Cooperative and Valley International Airport.

\*\*Records based on data from McAllen/Cooperative and McAllen/Miller International Airport.



## “Good Neighbor” Serves Meals and Picks Up Trash

By Maria Torres, General Forecaster

### Serving Meals to the Homeless and the Hungry



**Above:** Electronics Systems Analyst Paul Schaafsma, Senior Forecasters Geoffrey Bogorad and Mike Castillo, and Forecasters Maria Torres and Blair Scholl preparing food.

On October 3, 2013, volunteers from the National Weather Service Office in Brownsville cooked and served dinner to 110 people at the Good Neighbor Settlement House. Meteorologist-in-Charge Steve Drillette, Electronic System Analyst Paul Schaafsma, Senior Forecasters Geoffrey Bogorad and Mike Castillo, and Forecasters Maria Torres and Blair Scholl (above) prepared and served spaghetti with meat sauce and a salad. The volunteers served the homeless, the elderly, and families with children. There was enough food for many to have second and third helpings, and two people even asked whether the volunteers could fill large styrofoam cups with more food for later. Mrs. Torres coordinated the event and was very pleased with the results, saying “Everyone was very thankful for the meal and some even said that it was the best meal they had eaten in a long time!” She added, “We had a great team in the kitchen and in the dining room. We left with

a greater appreciation for everything we have.” The Good Neighbor Settlement House is located in Brownsville and helps people by providing such things as classes, clothing, and daily meals.

### Picking Up the Trash

Warning Coordination Meteorologist Barry Goldsmith participated in the 3rd Bi-National Beach Clean Up Day on October 5, 2013, which covered beaches from South Padre Island, Texas into Tamaulipas, Mexico. Cleaned beaches included Isla Blanca Park and Boca Chica Beach on the U.S. side of the border, and Playa Bagdad (Matamoros) and Playa Miramar (Tampico) in Mexico. Children of all ages, armed with trash bags and trash “grabbers,” showed up for the event. Mr. Goldsmith helped at Isla Blanca Park, where he filled about half a standard lawn bag with litter. Organizers suspected that tidal run-up from distant Tropical Storm Karen may have swept some of the litter into the Gulf of Mexico during the overnight hours prior to the day of the clean up. “South Padre Island is proud to be one of the cleanest beaches in Texas,” Mr. Goldsmith said. He added, “Our office participates in several litter removal activities each year to help keep it that way!”



**Right:** Warning Coordination Meteorologist Barry Goldsmith, participating in the 3rd Bi-National Beach Clean Up on South Padre Island.

## Spanish Language NOAA Weather Radio Transmitter Should Deploy in 2014

By Steve Drillette, Meteorologist-in-Charge

Two Spanish language NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) transmitters should be installed and operational by spring 2014. Mr. Manuel Cruz of the Lower Rio Grande Development Council (LRGVDC) facilitated a survey of the prospective transmitter towers in Harlingen and Pharr on November 19, 2013. Representatives from the LRGVDC, Armstrong Transmitter Corporation, Layman Tower Service, Sam's Electric, Texas DPS, and Brownsville National Weather Service (NWS) participated in the survey. Meteorologist-in-Charge (MIC) Steve Drillette and Electronic System Analyst Paul Schaafsma represented NWS Brownsville. The project is being funded by grants from the State of Texas through a partnership with local jurisdictions.

The NWS will be responsible for broadcasting 24-hour weather information in Spanish, including "tone-alerts" for local weather warnings and other emergency events. "We are looking forward to the benefits the Spanish language NWR transmitters will provide to our large, Spanish-only speaking population in the Rio Grande Valley," said MIC Steve Drillette. "Life-saving alert information will be easily obtainable after an initial, one-time minimal investment in a NWR."



**Above:** Brownsville NWS Electronic Systems Analyst Paul Schaafsma (standing just outside the doorway) coordinates with key partners regarding the proposed installation of the NWR transmitter at the tower site in Harlingen.



## Annual SKYWARN® Recognition Day A Big Success

By Brian Miller, Senior Forecaster

On December 7, 2013, the National Weather Service (NWS) Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley Office participated in the 15<sup>th</sup> SKYWARN® Recognition Day (SRD). SRD, co-sponsored by the American Radio Relay League and the NWS, is an annual 24-hour long event which recognizes amateur radio operators (Hams) for the vital public service they perform when reporting severe weather.

SRD is a fun-filled day where Hams operate at their local NWS offices, making contact with other operators, including other NWS offices. A successful contact (a QSL in Ham jargon) involves exchanging local weather conditions and other information, and offices are recognized for the number of contacts they make. This year, Hams operating from our call sign, WX5BRO, made several QSLs. SRD also occurred on National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day this year, and in an effort to commemorate the day, offices broadcast a different message for one hour between noon and 1 p.m. Instead of exchanging the local weather they said, "Conditions at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 were mostly sunny and 75 degrees."

The National Weather Service in Brownsville has been participating in SRD since 2001. Local Hams helping out this year included Travis (Andy) Treat (KF0MP), Raul Rosales, and Scott Reid (N5XTC). WX5BRO Hams helping out during the event included Senior Forecaster Brian Miller (KE5AWU) and Journeyman Forecaster Justin Gibbs (K4MWX).



**Above:** Senior Forecaster Brian Miller (call sign KE5AWU), participates in SKYWARN Recognition Day 2013 from the National Weather Service Office in Brownsville (call sign WX5BRO).

## Christmas Gifts for Teens at CASA

By Joseph Tomaselli, Senior Forecaster

Christmas is an exciting and magical time for children, with the hope and expectation of gifts from Santa Claus. But what if you are a teenager? Shouldn't Christmas be fun for you, too?

The National Weather Service office in Brownsville recently partnered with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program of Cameron and Willacy Counties to donate gifts for young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who are currently in the foster care system. CASA is a national network of 933 community-based programs that seeks to recruit, train, and support citizen-volunteers to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in courtrooms and communities. These volunteer advocates—empowered directly by the courts—offer judges the critical information needed to ensure that each child's rights and needs are being attended to while in foster care.

During the month of November, in support of CASA's annual Christmas Gifts for Teens project, staff members from the National Weather Service office in Brownsville donated various items, including a Sony boombox, Target and Best Buy gift cards, and Apple iPod accessories based upon two wish lists received from CASA. These gifts were presented to CASA representative Somer Robb on December 2, and were distributed during CASA's annual Christmas party on Saturday, December 14.

We hope that the CASA foster teens had a very merry Christmas, and we look forward to participating in this fun and worthwhile charity project in the coming years!

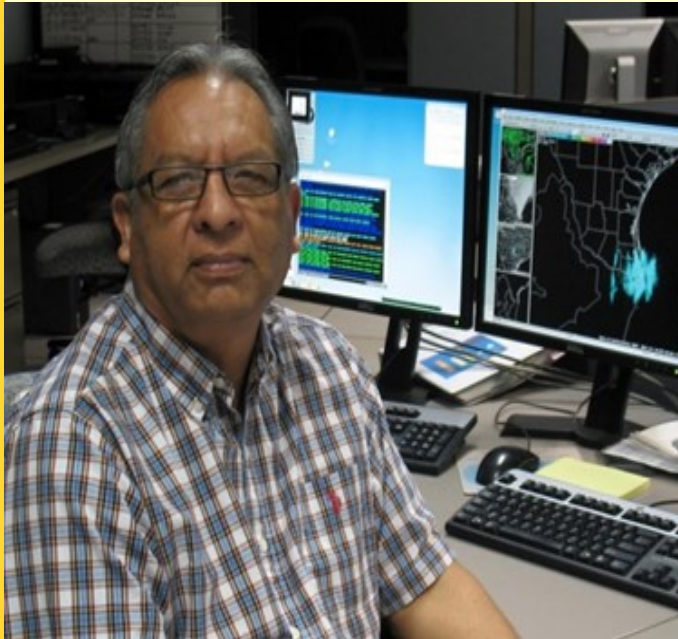


**Above:** Senior Forecaster Joseph Tomaselli and Meteorologist-in-charge Steve Drillette present CASA representative Somer Robb with gifts donated for the CASA Christmas Gifts for Teens project..

Photo courtesy of Barry Goldsmith

## National Weather Service Brownsville Bids Farewell to Fred Vega!

By Jim Campbell, Data Acquisition Program Manager



**Above:** Hydrometeorological Technician Alfredo Vega.

Photo courtesy of Jim Campbell

Long-time employee and staff favorite Alfredo Vega retired on January 1, 2014 after 41 years of federal service.

A native of Los Fresnos, Fred (as he's affectionately called) began his federal career as a communications specialist in the United States Air Force in September 1970. After military duty, Fred joined the National Weather Service in May 1974 as a communications technician here in Brownsville. His position was upgraded twice, first to Upper Air Specialist in 1976 and then to Weather Service Specialist in 1983, a position he held until 1987.

In August 1987, Fred transferred to the Weather Service office in Hondo, where he worked as a radar specialist on Hondo's WSR-57 network radar. His radar observations were vitally important in protecting the city of San Antonio from severe weather.

In 1990, Fred's adventurous side surfaced and he accepted a job as a Meteorology Technician at Cold Bay, Alaska. He worked there until 1993 when he accepted a promotion to Mobile Meteorological Technician at the Anchorage Forecast Office. From Anchorage, Fred traveled to some of the most isolated outposts in the Alaskan wilderness.

In late 1994, Fred was promoted again and became the Alaska Region Upper Air Program Manager. His tenure in that position was short, however, because he soon came back home.

In April 1995, Fred was selected for a Hydrometeorological Technician position here in Brownsville. Since then he has received and served as:

- Numerous letters of appreciation
- Awards for superior performance
- Department of Commerce bronze medal for superior support to Spanish speaking customers
- Regional Cline Awards for upper air performance in 2006 and 2008
- Guest lecturer at a World Meteorological Organization workshop in Buenos Aires, Argentina
- WFO Brownsville upper air and hydrology focal points
- Member of the WFO Brownsville Goodwill Team, and the Operations and Service Enhancement Team

Now that he's retired, Fred plans to spend quality time with his family on his "mini-ranch" in Los Fresnos, right down the street from his childhood home.

Congratulations Fred! You'll sure be missed!





# The Coastal Breeze



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Location	Frequency	Station
Brownsville	162.550	WWG-34
Pharr	162.400	KHB-33
Rio Grande City	162.425	WNG-601
Riviera	162.525	WNG-609
Laredo	162.550	WXK-26

**NOAA Weather Radio** in Deep South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley!

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