



# 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 2015**

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## NWS Staff Recognized for Wireless Emergency Alerts

By [Louis Uccellini](#), NWS Director

Each year, during Public Service Recognition Week, the Partnership for Public Service recognizes federal employees with the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America medals – the Sammie Awards – and this year I am pleased to say that one of the finalist teams, chosen from more than 500 nominees, is from NWS.

Congratulations to the NWS Wireless Emergency Alerts Team, who worked with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the wireless carrier industry to create a fast and geographically targeted alert system that sends emergency messages to the cell phones of those in the path of an approaching hazard, such as a tornado, flash flood or hurricane. Specifically, the work of Robert Bunge, Michael Gerber, Mark Paese and Gregory Zwicker is being recognized.

More than 15,000 warnings have geo-alerted people to hazardous weather since 2012, when the system went online. The precise targeting of threatened areas is a significant breakthrough in both technology and social science, which is exactly where we want NWS to go strategically.

Eight of the 30 finalists, including the Federal Employee of the Year, will be selected to be honored at an award celebration in Washington, DC, in October. As we recognize the achievements of our NWS staff, I also want to recognize all of you, both our partners and our employees, for the work you do day in and day out around the country that keeps NWS moving toward the goal of building a Weather-Ready Nation.



*Louis Uccellini,  
NWS Director*

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## Grant Disaster Anniversary Event Support Available

By [Wendy Marie Thomas](#), NWS Meteorologist, Silver Spring, MD

The [Disaster Distress Website and Hotline](#) (DDH) provides resources for handling disaster anniversaries. DDH is a private organization fully funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to address traumatic and psychological stress disorders resulting from natural and human-caused disasters. NWS is excited about the potential collaborations in this partnership, which include:

- ◆ Sharing DDH's contact and guidance information
- ◆ Offering webinars to DDH employees on how to use NWS products and services to increase their awareness
- ◆ Discussing potential ways for DHHS and NWS to share disaster information

The current focus on the Deepwater Horizon Anniversary may be of particular interest to those in the South. For more information, call the DDH hotline at [800-985-5990](tel:800-985-5990) or text "Talk With Us" to **66746**. DDH offers both short- and long-term assistance in English and Spanish. For instance, DDH is still fielding calls concerning Hurricane Sandy.



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## When the Dust Settles, Multidisciplinary Group Has New Vision

By [Glenn Lader](#), Meteorologist, NWS Tucson AZ

Blowing dust is a deadly weather phenomenon and significant societal issue across the Southwest and an occasional threat in many other areas. Blowing dust ranks as the third deadliest weather related phenomenon in Arizona, after heat and flooding.

The NWS offices in Phoenix and Tucson partnered again this year with the Arizona Department of Transportation to host a dust storm workshop in Casa Grande, AZ. The stretch of I-10 between the state's two largest cities, Phoenix and Tucson, is a major route for commerce and especially vulnerable to dust. There have been numerous fatal accidents in the past 5 years.

Highlights of this year's workshop included Phoenix WCM Ken Waters demonstrating a low-cost dust detection network he developed that is now being field tested, and El Paso, TX, WCM John Fausett discussing lessons learned from a fatal accident on I-10 just east of the Arizona/New Mexico border last year. Other presentations included traffic management, soil conditions and dust production and potential design improvements for landscape architecture. Extensive discussion also took place on how to harness this diverse group toward further action outside the yearly workshops.

This year's workshop was the largest yet with over 75 participants spanning nearly 30 federal, state and local agencies including public safety, emergency management, air quality, soil science, agriculture, academia, the private sector and the research community. The workshop this year expanded considerably to include attendees from New Mexico where similar issues occur with dust. Information about the workshop including presentations can be found at: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/psr/dust/2015/index.php>



*Participants at the 4th Annual Dust Workshop learned the status of a new database and gained some best practices among many other sessions.*

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## Community Assistance Program Helps Buy Turn Around Don't Drown Signs

By [Kerry Jones](#), WCM Albuquerque, NM, and [Katie Garrett](#), NWS Communications, Silver Spring, MD

Flash flooding is incredibly dangerous in the Desert Southwest and is especially common during the summer monsoon season. Since 1959, 64 New Mexicans have lost their lives and another 78 have been seriously injured in flash floods; 66 percent of the fatalities occurred when a vehicle was driven into flood waters.

To address this annual threat, the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NM DHSEM) and the New Mexico Floodplain Managers Association (NMFMA), in coordination with the NWS, launched the Turn Around



*The first Turn Around Don't Drown® sign recipient was Lincoln County, NM. From left are Curt Temple (Lincoln County), Bill Borthwick (NM DHSEM), and Samantha Mendez (Lincoln County).*

Don't Drown® Low Water Crossing campaign. The road sign campaign highlights the [dangers of driving into flood waters](#).

New Mexico State Floodplain Coordinator Bill Borthwick received funding from FEMA Region VI through the Community Assistance Program, State Support Services Element to acquire 85 Turn Around Don't Drown® signs. Borthwick and officials from NMFMA and NWS worked together to place the signs at low water crossings in New Mexico.

Communities who receive the signs are required to photograph and obtain the sign's GPS location. The state will use this information to construct a statewide low-water crossing database. There are many more low-water crossings in New Mexico that need signs. This team will work toward procuring and installing these warning signs in locations vulnerable to flash floods and making New Mexico residents more weather-ready. For additional information on the Turn Around Don't Drown program, visit: <http://tadd.weather.gov/>

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## More Than 5000 Kids Learn Weather Safety at Busch Baseball Bash

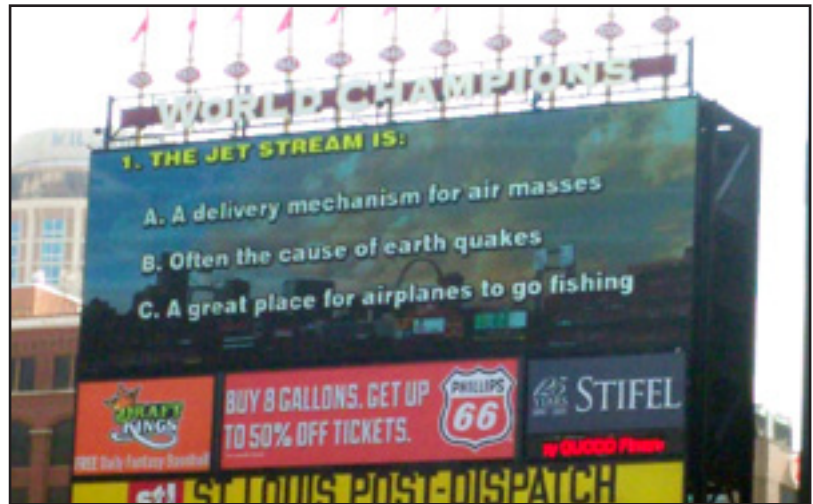
By [Jim Kramper](#), WCM, NWS St. Louis, MO

How do you reach thousands of kids with safety messages in the most efficient manner? In the St. Louis area, you invite them to the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Busch Bash, sponsored by KSDK Channel 5, the St. Louis Cardinals, and NWS at Busch Stadium. On April 16, 5,000 elementary school students from Illinois and Missouri gathered in the lower section of the stadium before the Cardinals game against the Milwaukee Brewers to learn the basics of weather.

Channel 5 Meteorologists Cindy Preszler, Mike Roberts, Scott Connell, and Bree Smith used the giant video screen at the stadium to explain topics such as the jet stream, cold and warm fronts, and high and low pressure. After each section, students were selected from the crowd to see if they could correctly answer multiple choice questions on each topic. The rest of the crowd was then asked if they agreed with the answer.

NWS St. Louis, MO, Warning Coordination Meteorologist Jim Kramper and Electronics Systems Analyst Brandon Baker released a weather balloon to illustrate the Upper Air System and how meteorologists gather data from the upper atmosphere. Just before the balloon was launched, Fredbird, the Cardinals' mascot, burst onto the scene trying to stop the launch so he could keep the balloon for himself.

Busch Stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals, was certified as StormReady in 2007, becoming the first stadium in Major League Baseball to be recognized as StormReady.



*Stadium info screen teaches weather safety during the annual Busch Bash.*

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## US Coast Guard to Release Boating Safety App

The U.S. Coast Guard will release its first boating safety App on Saturday, May 16, the kickoff to this year's National Safe Boating Week. The Boating Safety Mobile app was *not* designed to replace a boater's marine VHF radio, which the Coast Guard strongly recommends all boaters have aboard their vessels. The app provides additional boating safety resources for mobile device users. Features of the app include:

- ◆ State boating information
- ◆ Safety equipment checklist
- ◆ Free boating safety check requests

- ◆ Navigation rules
- ◆ Float plans
- ◆ Calling features to report pollution or suspicious activity.



When location services are enabled, users can receive the latest weather reports from the closest NOAA weather buoy as well as report the location of a hazard on the water.

The app also features an Emergency Assistance button which, with locations services enabled, will call the closest Coast Guard command center.

The app is self-contained so personal information is stored on the phone and is not sent to the Coast Guard unless the user chooses to send it. The Coast Guard does not track a user's location, and the app does not track a user's location unless the app is being used.

National Safe Boating Week, which takes place May 16–22, is an annual event that encourages all boaters to practice safe boating. For more information on National Safe Boating Week, as well as general boating safety information, please visit <http://www.safeboatingcampaign.com/> and <http://www.safeboatingcouncil.org>.

For more information on the app, available in the Apple and Google Play online stores, please visit <http://www.uscg.mil/mobile> or contact Lt. Anastacia Visneski at (202) 372-4648.

## Weather Lab introduced by the Smithsonian Science Educational Center


By [Ron Gird](#) and [Chris Wamsley](#), NWS Meteorologists, Silver Spring, MD

The Smithsonian Science Education program provides students across the country and around the world with captivating, first-hand learning experiences. The partnership between NWS and the Smithsonian Institution provides scientifically-based research and best practices that offer transforming science education programs for grades K-10.

With the help of NWS Headquarters Meteorologists Ron Gird and Chris Wamsley, the Smithsonian has taken Weather Lab from an idea to reality. Weather Lab is a tool to help visualize how North America's weather is formed. This lab is designed to be tailored to the complex interactions between air masses and ocean currents, but like all models, it represents probable outcomes. Each prediction is for possible outcomes during the spring.



This educational approach is straightforward, revolutionary and results oriented. The lab's portfolio of training programs, curricula, and resources have captured the attention of national and international experts. The program provides an opportunity to change students' attitudes, improve outcomes, and connect learning to future employment through the STEM disciplines: science, technology, engineering, and math. More information is available at the [Smithsonian Science Education](#) website.



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