



Aware

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Media Exercise Helps Ensure Press Access During Major Event

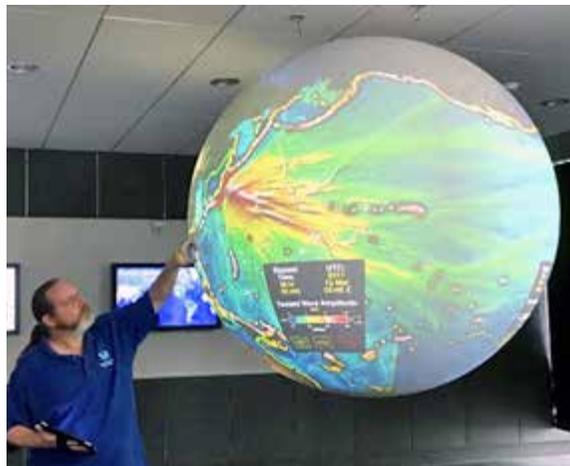
By [Charlie Woodrum](#), Pacific Region WCM, Honolulu, HI

The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) and Pacific Region Headquarters (PRH) co-hosted a tsunami media exercise with Hawaii media reps and local emergency management (EM) partners in May. The intent of the exercise was to run through the logistics of getting media outlets to the Inouye Regional Center (IRC) on Ford Island, to test equipment, and to help ensure the media is providing consistent tsunami threat messaging.

At the meeting, NWS provided a logistics run-through followed by tsunami messaging guidance from a geologist. The event included input from the Hawaii State Emergency Management Agency and its Natural Hazards Officer. The event also featured a Science on a Sphere demonstration by an oceanographer and a tour of PTWC operations.

At the end of the event, engineers from three local Honolulu media outlets discussed interview and press conference logistics within the building and tested their media truck signals outside of the building.

This exercise allowed the NOAA team to walk through the steps of a tsunami threat with the media and review how a venue with high security could host members of the media, ensuring timely messaging from PTWC to the public. The Pacific Region Regional Operations Center is the 24/7 point-of-contact during tsunami threats for the media and will serve as a liaison between PTWC, the media and the Navy during these events. This will ultimately ensure that NWS partners and the public have the latest information during a tsunami threat.



Nathan Becker, Pacific Tsunami Warning Center PTWC Oceanographer, demonstrates the tsunami energy map on NOAA's Science on a Sphere.

Hurricane Preparedness Boosted with Sunshine Exercise

By [Robert Garcia](#), Senior Meteorologist/Lead Forecaster, NWS Miami-South Florida

NWS Miami-South Florida supported the Department of Veterans Affairs, South Florida Federal Executive Board, and a variety of federal, state, and local partners as part of the Sunshine Endeavor exercise in late May. This complex exercise kicked off on Memorial Day with tropical briefings on a fictional "Hurricane Thomas."

More than 10 meteorologists from NWS Miami provided email briefings and webinars related to the exercise using the latest enhanced messaging templates created by NWS Miami Senior Meteorologist Arlena Moses and the Southern Region tropical template team. After the hurricane landfall part of the exercise, NWS Miami support shifted to the response phase of the event, which culminated with a full day exercise. In this phase, the team simulated a failure of Herbert Hoover Dike around Lake Okeechobee; NWS Miami staff practiced issuing Dam Break Flash Flood Watches and Warnings for the vulnerable region.

NWS Miami Meteorologist Barry Baxter was deployed to the Incident Command Post in West Palm Beach for the exercise to provide an enhanced weather watch.

Back at the office, some NWS Miami staff provided additional weather support to the exercise while other staff dealt with an actual weather situation. Staff implemented the office severe weather operations plan in the face of strong to severe storms expected to push across South Florida on the afternoon of the exercise.

Several partners were able to use NWS briefing products to make decisions to move their exercises to times with better weather, increasing safety for participants and saving financial resources.

You can find more information about the Sunshine Endeavor exercise at [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) website. Preparing staff to provide different aspects of decision support can help form better relationships with all kinds of partners. Taking part in exercises like this better prepares NWS staff and introduces users to the full suite of NWS products.



Sunshine Endeavor/Hurricane Thomas exercise with the Veteran's Affairs Department and South Florida Federal Executive Board

NWS Develops Tool For High Elevation Forecasts



Ed Plumb, Fairbanks WCM, with NPS Rangers during a June visit to Denali Base Camp. The summit of 20,310 ft. Denali summit is visible in the background.

By [Audrey Rubel](#), Physical Scientist, Alaska Region Headquarters, Anchorage, AK

Denali National Park and Preserve, encompassing more than 6 million acres and home to the 20,310 foot Denali, has been a mecca for mountaineers, adventure seekers and wildlife fans for over a century. [Visitor data](#) shows that approximately 600,000 people visited the park in 2016.

To improve visitor safety, NWS Fairbanks General Forecaster Lindsay Tardif-Huber developed a tool to assist forecasters with Graphical Forecast Editor grid editing for specific elevations on Denali. This tool allows easy editing of specific camp elevations on the mountain and ensures continuity between the grids and text forecast.

Fairbanks Warning Coordination Meteorologist Ed Plumb recently visited the National Park Service (NPS) staff at Denali to obtain input from the NPS and the climbing community on current NWS

products and Impact-Based Decision Support Services (IDSS). Mountaineers come from all over the world to climb Denali. Denali weather is extreme, characterized by summertime temperatures well below zero, multi-day blizzards and dangerous winds.

NWS Fairbanks issues the Denali Recreational Forecast during climbing season, mid-April to mid-July. NPS Rangers and climbers rely on this forecast to make critical go or no-go decisions about attempting to climb the mountain. NWS Fairbanks also provides NPS with spot forecasts for Search and Rescue purposes when severe conditions are expected. In addition, NWS information is critical to pilots and passengers on flightseeing tours. Most climbers spend 2-3 weeks on Denali, including acclimatization and contending with bad weather. In 2016, about 60 percent of Denali summit attempts by over 1,100 climbers were successful.

Denali National Park became a [WRN Ambassador](#) in May 2016, but the partnership between the NWS and the park began in the early 1920s when the park's rangers began recording daily climate conditions as [cooperative weather observers](#) for the Weather Bureau. NWS Fairbanks has provided climbing (recreational) forecasts and IDSS for Denali since 1983.

Communications Exercise Teams-Up with Emergency Managers and Media

By [Corey Bagel](#), Meteorologist, NWS Caribou, ME



NWS Caribou, ME, Senior Meteorologist Priscilla Farrar conducts a phone interview with the media on Hurricane Kyle.

Effective communication has always been critically important to the NWS mission to protect lives and property. To strengthen this key skill, NWS Caribou, ME, offered a special communications session during its annual partners workshop.

NWS Caribou staff developed a Decision Support Services briefing package on Hurricane Kyle, which made landfall in Nova Scotia in 2008. The exercise started when Hurricane Kyle was forecast to impact in the next 24 hours. The staff broke into small teams and worked on talking points for core partners, print and TV media, and the public. Consistent messaging was an important theme for the teams.

Participants then rotated through a series of eight exercise stations offering an opportunity to use Skype online video, conduct interviews over the phone and in person with EMs, and conduct a TV interview. Other practice stations addressed challenges that can be thrown in by social media and calls from the public.

The primary goals of the exercises were to communicate more effectively and to ensure consistent messaging. The exercise was also a great learning experience because many participants had never used Skype to conduct a media interview.

Darren Woods, Director of Aroostook County Emergency Management said, "Aroostook EMA enjoyed being a part of the exercise held recently at the National Weather Service Office in Caribou. This was a great opportunity for our agencies to learn from one another the most important task of public information."

Solar Eclipse Poses Unexpected Challenges

By [Kelly Allen](#), WCM, North Platte, NE

The Great Solar Eclipse is coming—and so are people from all over the world—to the sparsely populated Sandhills of Nebraska. The village of Stapleton, located about 30 miles north of North Platte, NE, is home to just 300 people. The community expects to host several thousand people with varied English-speaking abilities for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Local and state EMs began asking themselves, "How do we prepare ourselves and the

community for this unprecedented event?”

Logan County Emergency Management joined forces with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency to put together a tabletop exercise, which they followed with a full scale exercise to work out the worst case scenario: a terror attack at the Logan County Fairgrounds during the Eclipse.

Numerous agencies were invited to take part, including all mutual aid partners in law enforcement and emergency medical services, in addition to the FBI, the NWS, the eclipse event planners, sheriffs and EMS from neighboring counties, fire departments, and all members of the Incident Management Team from the Incident Commander to the Liaison Officer (the town pastor).

During the full-scale exercise, even the life flight crew from Great Plains Health in North Platte flew in to take part.

What does this have to do with weather?

Actually, the NWS can assist in a number of ways. Through repeated appearances at tabletop exercises and Local Emergency Planning Committee meetings around the state, our partners are learning about the tremendous resource they have in the NWS.

In this particular exercise, a bomb was involved so the NWS offered to run the Hybrid Single Particle Lagrangian Integrated Trajectory (HYSPLIT) dispersion model so law enforcement could focus its evacuations if the bomb contained a harmful gas or biological contaminant. The exercise participants also learned the NWS can and does mobilize to support local Emergency Operations Centers to keep a watchful eye on hazardous weather that may affect cleanup efforts. NWS also can provide an immediate Spot Forecast from the office in the event of an emergency. Working alongside the NWS during exercises helps us all support a Weather-Ready Nation as we learn how to best support one another before a disaster strikes.



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