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Incident Meteorologist Provides Weather Support for NOAA Safe Sanctuaries Drill



Incident Meteorologist **Rick Davis** aboard NOAA helicopter, prior to overflight of simulated hazardous spill area.



Satellite dish for the **All-hazards Meteorological Response System**, set up at the operations center dockside in Key Largo.

by Rick Davis

As Incident Meteorologist from NWS Tampa Bay Area, I was dispatched to the Florida Keys this spring in support of the 2005 NOAA Safe Sanctuary emergency response drill. From April 19th through April 21st, NOAA developed and executed a scenario where a hypothetical 800 foot container ship ran hard aground on Elbow Reef, in the Upper Region of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, spilling two hundred thousand gallons of heavy fuel and oil. Many other scenarios were injected into the drill

These forecasts and observations were used in the NOAA HAZMAT trajectory models to determine the movement of the spilled oil. All operations were then directed to respond to the oil in that area based on the forecasts. There was close coordination with the marine forecasters in the NWS Key West office and their Warning Coordination Meteorologist, John Rizzo, who was in the Marathon Emergency Operations Center Command Post, to produce the most accurate site specific forecasts and daily weather briefings

including a boat accident, a dive accident, chemical accident, dispersant issue, invasive species issues and many others.

The Safe Sanctuary drill was run in real-time, so weather was extremely critical. There were hundreds of personnel on and in the water, on the ground and in the air supporting the response objectives. I used all the latest in IMET equipment, including All-Hazards Meteorological Response System (AMRS). The portable communication and work station was set up at the operations center, located dock side in Key Largo. I was able to provide accurate, site-specific forecasts and updates daily, as well as provide real-time observations from the immediate spill area.

during this simulated event.

This interagency simulation had each NOAA Line Office and Divisions well represented, and all demonstrated their unique capabilities and communications during this emergency operation. Numerous spill operations were coordinated and several types of new emergency response equipment were deployed. Many outside agencies also participated in the exercise including the United States Coast Guard, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, private HAZMAT companies, local and region emergency planners, and other state and local agencies. NOAA declared the spill drill to be a tremendous success!

Of Interest...

Where Does the "Wx" Come From?

by Dan Noah

Before the days of instant messaging, chat rooms, and text messaging, there was Morse Code. It was developed by Alfred Vail while he was helping Samuel Morse with Morse's invention of the telegraph. Morse Code is an early form of digital communication and was widely used from the 1840s until the 1950s. However, unlike modern binary digital codes that use just two states (commonly represented as 1 and 0), it uses five - dot, dash, short gap (between each letter), medium gap (between words) and long gap (between sentences).

Morse Code was used by the Western Union Telegraph Company and American District Telegraph (ADT, now best know for home security). These companies charged customers based on the length of the message sent. As a result, abbreviations were used to keep the cost of transmission down. Commonly used Morse Code abbreviations included STN for "station", NIL for "nothing", Z for "Zulu", and WX for "weather".

Supporters

Stepping Up to the Plate



Information Technology Officer (ITO) 'Coach' **Tony Harper** (back, center) posing with his team, the East Bay (Junior Girls League Fast Pitch) Marlins.

Kudos to the NWS Ruskin staff for sponsoring an East Bay (Hillsborough County) Junior Fast-Pitch Girls Little League softball team this past spring! The sponsorship was needed to help maintain this "field of dreams" so the season could continue. ITO Tony Harper, whose pride swells for his teams' efforts each season, coached the team into the playoffs! The team, known as the East Bay (NWS) Marlins, had an end-of-the season party (above) and a plaque will be prominently displayed soon!

Customer Service

NWS Tampa Bay Awarded At 2005 Governor's Hurricane Conference



From left: Warning Coordination Meteorologist **Dan Noah**, Tropical Program Manager **Barry Goldsmith**, and Meteorologist-in-Charge **Shawn Bennett** accepting Public Information and Education Award at the Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference banquet.

At the recent 19th Annual Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference, NWS Tampa Bay received the 2005 Public Education/Information Award. The award is given to an individual or organization that has developed an innovative and effective public educational tool or program which has improved hurricane preparedness, response, recovery or mitigation in the State of Florida. In this case, NWS Tampa Bay was awarded

"for their continued efforts in developing hurricane and severe weather preparedness programs in cooperation with local emergency management, as well as their dedication to providing high levels of customer service to the emergency management community."

The memorable 2004 Hurricane Season provided one of the biggest challenges for the office; this award is a testament to the quality and quantity of critical information provided, especially during

We Couldn't Have Done It Without You!



From left: Meteorologist-In-Charge **Shawn Bennett** and award recipients **Bob Stanhope**, **Paul Toth**, and **Sean Fleeman**, flanked by NWS Southern Region Director **Bill Proenza**.

On May 12th, Mr. Proenza presented these

Hurricane Charley which directly impacted the forecast area. Every member of Team NWS Tampa Bay had a positive impact on the community, and all share equally in this achievement. Way to go!

gentlemen with the 2005 NOAA Environmental Hero Award for their contributions to saving lives and property during Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne. Working as volunteer net control operators, they spent more than 125 hours on the Skywarn™ radio network, gathering real-time reports and helping the NWS forecasters provide life saving, up-to-the-minute weather information in west central and southwest Florida.

Community

A Busy Pre-Season!



Student intern **Jessica Fieux** speaks with staffer of Congresswoman Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL) about the upcoming hurricane season and NOAA Weather Radio.

Office Staff Involved in Dozens of Hurricane Planning Activities

After the busiest hurricane season in recent memory, it was no surprise to see the level of public awareness rise much higher in Spring 2005. For the staff of NWS Tampa Bay, this meant an unprecedented number of outreach activities, beginning in April and culminating with nearly daily events during June. As of this writing, office staff has participated in more than 25 activities, not including Skywarn™ training, through mid June! More outreach is likely before peak season arrives later this summer.

Activities included everything from conferences and expositions to speaking engagements, with attendance large and small. NWS Tampa Bay was seen in just about every county along the Suncoast, from Levy to Collier as well as interior west central Florida. The largest and most prestigious was the Florida Governor's Hurricane Conference (above), attended by nearly 3000 persons including

Partnership

Media Workshop 2005 Highlights



Forecaster **Tony Reynes** discussing the benefits of NWS Tampa Bay's web page "En Español".

A media workshop was held at the offices of the Tampa Tribune to discuss a variety of NWS-media partnership issues. The topics ranged from NWS tropical cyclone procedures for the 2005 season to the latest on NOAA/NWS Tsunami initiatives.

Attendees included broadcasters and print media from the Tampa Bay, Sarasota/Bradenton, and Fort Myers/Naples markets. Most of the over-the-air commercial networks were represented, including spanish-language Univision.

The gathering heard talks by staff members Shawn Bennett on improving threat communication, Dan Noah on graphical hazards initiatives and tsunami warning plans, Tropical Program manager Barry Goldsmith on tropical cyclone dissemination methods for 2005 and beyond, and forecaster Tony Reynes on the ongoing development of Spanish-language web pages. Finally, Midland Corporation, makers of many NOAA Weather Radios, spoke on plans to sell at deep discounts message-encoding

emergency managers in not only Florida but other Gulf and Atlantic coastal states. Other well attended events included the annual Citrus, Hernando, and Pasco county expos, and the Raymond James Financial expo. NWS Tampa Bay staff also spoke at three additional conferences in Jacksonville (March), New Orleans (March), and the Bahamas (April).

Media outreach was substantial, as well. Staffers participated in several live and taped interviews for television and radio, with a heavy concentration on the expectations for an active 2005 Atlantic Basin season as well as preparedness. For the thousands who visited our booths or attended our talks, we hope all learned enough to stay safe later this summer, should a storm make landfall on the Suncoast.

radios at every Walgreen's Pharmacy later this summer.

Graphical Tropical Hazards Coming Soon!

NWS Tampa Bay will be providing a new webpage for graphical tropical weather hazards in time for the peak of 2005 hurricane season! This page will provide a quick glance at individual weather hazards for a tropical cyclone event. and prospective impacts, in a common color-coded format. Impacts for each element will be available at the click of a mouse. The primary five tropical weather hazards will be available: Wind, Surge, Inland Flood, Tornado, and Waves.