



NWS Brownsville Outreach Activities

Spring/Early Summer, 2011



The Wal*Mart Hurricane Guide Campaign: Our “Blue” Heaven



From [Hurricane Preparedness Week](#) (May 22nd through 28th) through June 2^{no}, ten employees of NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley visited 14 Wal*Mart stores from Port Isabel to Rio Grande City, and distributed thousands of the [2011 Texas Hurricane Guide, Rio Grande Valley Edition](#), to shoppers who stopped by the display tables (above). Several hundred shoppers stopped by to ask questions about the upcoming season, chat about the current weather, or compliment the office on a job well done. The campaign showcased the partnership among federal/state government, corporate supporters, and local media sponsors to provide critical hurricane preparedness information in English and en Español to residents of the Rio Grande Valley. The following table includes all completed visits to area Wal*Mart stores.

Day	Date	Store #	Store Location	Time	Staff	Status
Sun	May 22					
Mon	May 23					
Tue	May 24	413	Port Isabel	1-5 PM	Goldsmith	Complete
		883	Raymondville	4-8 PM	Tomaselli	Complete
		5493	Brownsville	4-8 PM	Castillo	Complete
Wed	May 25	1000	Brownsville	1230-430 PM	Gil	Complete
		595	Harlingen	4-8 PM	Tomaselli	Complete
Thu	May 26	1000	Brownsville	1230-430 PM	Campbell	Complete
		1296	San Benito	10A-2P	Billings	Complete
		1041	Weslaco	10A-2P	Vipond	Complete
Fri	May 27	5493	Brownsville	11A – 3P	Vega	Complete
Sat	May 28	456	Brownsville	10A-530P	Goldsmith/Bogorad	Complete
Sun	May 29					
Mon	May 30					
Tue	May 31					
Wed	June 1	397	McAllen	10A-2P	Goldsmith/DeLeon/Drilette	Complete
		395	Mission	3-7 PM	Goldsmith	Complete
Thu	June 2	429	Edinburg	2-6 PM	Vipond	Complete
		1958	Rio Grande City	11A-3P	Drillette	Complete

Decision Support Minute: McAllen AirEvac Exercise



Left: Texas State Highway Patrol Captain John Rodriguez, WCM Barry Goldsmith, and Regional Liaison Officer District 3A, Mr. Jorge Jalomo after weather briefing prior to AirEvac exercise. **Right:** Preparing mock patients for evacuation in the C-130 transport aircraft.

Warning Coordination Meteorologist *Barry Goldsmith* and Forecaster-in-Training *Erin Billings* visited the Emergency Operations Center in McAllen on June 10th, where a full scale exercise was conducted to simulate how federal, state, and local governmental agencies would evacuate medical needs residents and patients with no other means of safe transport from the Rio Grande Valley should a life threatening hurricane bear down on the region.

The exercise began on June 8th, designated as “H-120”, or roughly 120 hours until arrival of tropical storm force winds. At this stage, initial plans are activated for possible deployment of federal and state resources to the Valley for evacuation and sheltering. The exercise continued on June 9th, designated as H-96; at this stage, plans are finalized to move equipment and resources into place to begin the evacuation. On June 10th (H-72), emergency operations were fully activated to practice as if a real incident was underway. Participants included state emergency operations personnel, regional commanders, and county/city responders. Expertise included state and local health officials, Highway Patrol, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the U.S. Army, among others. Daily decisions were based largely on webinars describing potential impacts from the storm.

Hurricane “Barry”, designed by WCM Goldsmith and based on major Hurricane Allen (1980), showed how clearly communicated weather information is used to make large scale and often expensive decisions to ensure public safety for a growing population with abundant functional and medical needs.



Left: C130 transport used for medical needs evacuation at McAllen/Miller International Airport. **Right:** Inside the C-130, showing an example of a “bunk” where patients would lie during transport. At least 35 patients can be transported securely in each specially outfitted C-130.

Hurricane Expo/Fair Season Kicks into Gear!



Alfredo Vega gives outlook on the 2011 hurricane season en Español to visitors to the City of Brownsville Hurricane Fair at Southmost Library 5/26.

Staff from NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley continued to be out and about in the area, probably at a fair, expo, or preparedness activity just a short drive from your neighborhood! In addition to the Wal*Mart campaign, we've provided information, videos, and more at the following locations since May:

- KidFish! Brownsville (May 21st)
- Port Isabel Town Hall (May 24th)
- City of Brownsville Hurricane Fair (May 26th)
- South Padre Island Town Hall (May 31st)
- Simon Malls (Valle Vista, Harlingen; La Plaza, McAllen; RGV Premium Outlets, Mercedes)
- Rotary Clubs of Brownsville
- ...and more!

Virtual Video Tour of Our Office – Coming Soon!

A video tour of our office will be available before the end of June. The tour, lasting around 45 minutes, will include several friendly staff members and volunteers who show viewers around the office and many of the jobs we do on a routine basis. Some of the tour stops include:



- An overview of our office with Mr. Steve Drillette
- An informal chat with forecasters, describing how weather information is produced and transmitted.
- Discussion on how weather radio broadcasts are made
- A live recording of the afternoon weather balloon release and how the data are processed
- A view inside the Doppler Radar and description of how data flow from the “hardware” to the software inside the office
- Using our webpage for a constant flow of information

The tour will be posted to YouTube; look for an announcement on our website.

Serving the Valley Community with More than Meteorology



The National Weather Service in Brownsville is about more than weather. In addition to hurricane and other meteorologically related visits, booths, and tours, a number of staff have involved themselves in community assistance.

Food Bank of The Rio Grande Valley: Our staff will be helping to sort food for easier distribution at the McAllen facility on selected dates through late July. We are also collecting canned goods at the office for donation to the Food Bank. This is a most critical time for such donations and volunteer help as we head deeper into the 2011 hurricane season. To donate, come by our office, buzz into the main gate and identify yourself as “donating canned food items”.

Colonia Hurricane Outreach: Many of our most vulnerable residents live in *colonias*. Colonia structures can range from small but sturdy block cottages to unanchored, aging mobile homes. Many of the residents speak little or no English. NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley provided information and friendly staff to the Browne Community Center, Cameron Park (each in Brownsville), and the San Juan CRC (Hidalgo County) through mid June. Another event is tentatively scheduled for the end of June in the Southmost section of Brownsville.

Texas “Adopt-a-Beach” Program: A number of staff headed to South Padre Island (below) on April 30th to assist hundreds of residents, visitors, and school children to clean up the north portion of the beach. Hundreds, if not more than a thousand bags were collected, filled with cans, plastic bags and containers, Styrofoam, paper cups, and even larger wood and metal objects. Trash collected on South Padre Island (19 tons) was second only to Galveston Island (52 tons) NWS Brownsville staff collected more than one hundred pounds in at least a dozen bags.

