



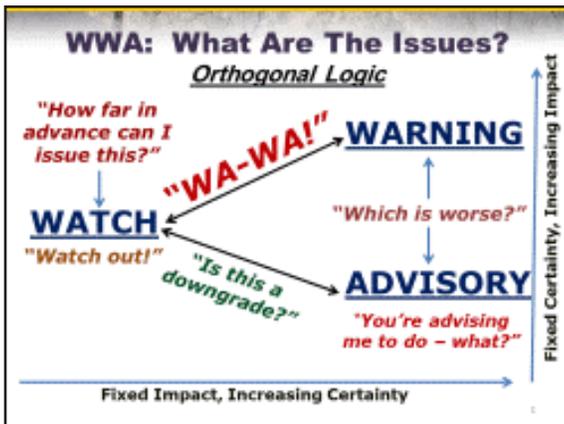
# Aware

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.

November 2015

## Hazard Simplification Workshop: A Roadmap for Change

By [Andy Horvitz](#), Meteorologist, NWS Analyze, Forecast and Support Office



The NWS held a highly successful Hazard Simplification Workshop, October 27-29, at the NWS Training Center in Kansas City, MO. Attendees included a broad spectrum of constituents including industry partners, emergency managers (EM), social scientists and NWS and NOAA staff.

The workshop identified key, recurring recommendations for both short-term and long-term fixes to the NWS Watch, Warning and Advisory system. In the short term, attendees favored collapsing the current 122 NWS products into a smaller number to reduce confusion. Participants noted flooding was a particular area of concern because of the number of NWS products now issued.

In the long term, there were a number of suggestions to replace our current alert language with terms such as “be prepared,” “be informed,” “take caution,” and/or “take action” as alternatives to the terms “advisory” and “watch.”

Participants also supported using a hierarchical, 3-5 color coding scheme to depict impact and recommended action.

The NWS will leverage social science to explore longer term options, while planning options for shorter-term changes in the coming year. NWS will continue to reach out to our partners and stakeholders through opportunities such as the International Association of Emergency Managers Conference and the American Meteorological Society's Annual Meeting. Once a final set of changes has been determined, NWS will provide an opportunity for public comment/review before a decision on operational implementation.

## Meeting Helps Unite Diverse Needs of Five States

By [Nicholas Fenner](#), Meteorologist and [Mike Gittinger](#), WCM, NWS Amarillo, TX

The Oklahoma Panhandle poses unique geographical challenges to the EM and weather forecast communities. The Panhandle, 166 miles long and only 34 miles wide, is bordered by four other states—Texas, New Mexico, Kansas and Colorado—and is subject to some of the most extreme weather in the United States.

Given this unique geography, responding to mutual aid agreement requests in neighboring counties regularly leads EMs to cross state lines. Though the Panhandle counties are part of the Amarillo Weather Forecast Office (WFO) County Warning Area, EMs may respond to areas covered by five WFOs across two NWS regions.



NWS WCMs help coordinate the 5-State Emergency Management Meeting. From left, Jeff Hutton, WCM, Dodge City, KS; Mike Gittinger, WCM, Amarillo TX; Kerry Jones, WCM, Albuquerque, NM; Jody James, WCM, Lubbock, TX; and Rick Smith, WCM, Norman, OK.

Because of these unique circumstances, Oklahoma EMs conduct quarterly Five-State Emergency Management meetings. For the November 3 meeting, Beaver County EM Keith Shadden and Texas County EM Harold Tyson collaborated with WFO Amarillo Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) Mike Gittinger to conduct an Integrated Warning Team meeting. The special session included representatives from each of the surrounding WFOs: Albuquerque, NM; Amarillo, TX; Dodge City, KS; Lubbock, TX; and Norman, OK.

It was the first time in many years that representatives from so many surrounding WFOs gathered with EMs and preparedness officials in this region. Attendees stressed the importance of quality event-driven graphics and briefings provided by WFOs in advance of significant weather events.

WCMs from four of the five surrounding WFOs helped develop the agenda. Additional forecasters and Meteorologists in Charge took part as well. Regular five-state representatives include EM Coordinators from the region, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, Texas Department of Public Safety, Oklahoma State Department of Health, print media, and other city and county officials from the Oklahoma Panhandle. Presentations and panel discussions focused on:

- ◆ Possible winter weather impacts from a possible strong El Niño
- ◆ Evolving roles of NWS offices in providing decision support briefings and specialized graphics
- ◆ New web-based weather tools
- ◆ Collaborative efforts of neighboring WFOs

Judging from attendee comments at the end of the meeting, the event was a huge success.

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## Integrated Warning Team Workshop Builds Unified Message

By [Andy Foster](#), Meteorologist, NWS Springfield, MO

NWS Springfield, MO, in cooperation with local EMs and media, held an Integrated Warning Team workshop this fall in Springfield, MO, to promote a unified message that maximizes public warning response. This 1-day event brought together weather enterprise stakeholders including EMs, media, state parks, Department of Transportation staff and health care officials. The workshop's objectives included:

- ◆ Building relationships among key players
- ◆ Identifying challenges and solutions to improve warning communication
- ◆ Integrating social science findings and concepts



*NWS Central Region Director Chris Strager presented a renewed vision of a Weather-Ready Nation.*

This workshop provided a great opportunity to further build healthy partnerships by listening to varied perspectives, challenges and proposed solutions.

NWS Central Region Director Chris Strager presented a renewed vision of a Weather-Ready Nation. Dr. Laura Myers, University of Alabama, offered a social science perspective that provided the backdrop for numerous discussions during the event.

Participants discussed many topics related to enhancing communication among workshop attendees such as creating a consistent warning message and improving warning response through collaborative initiatives. Some of the specific topics discussed included:

- ◆ Building on previous successes to expand a standard outdoor siren policy
- ◆ Better sharing of storm reports through tools such as NWSChat
- ◆ Using common weather hazard awareness resources
- ◆ Exploiting the use of social media with consistent messaging
- ◆ Solidifying pre-event services and communication

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## Lightning Safety Scheduled for ESPN2

By [Melody Magnus](#), Editor, NWS/INNOVIM, Analyze Support and Forecast Office



*Lightning safety sign at Bowling Green University*

NWS has a vibrant lightning safety program that has helped reduce lightning deaths and injuries by as much as 50 percent since the turn of the century. A recent expansion of the program encourages stadiums and large outdoors venues to complete a [lightning safety toolkit](#) and gain recognition as a lightning safe venue.

Stadiums attract thousands and even tens of thousands of people to outdoor events, leaving attendees, players and staff in danger of a lightning strike. A preparedness plan is essential to protecting lives. The most recent venue to gain recognition is Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Bowling Green is the 15<sup>th</sup> organization to complete NOAA's Lightning Safety Toolkit for Large Venues. There also are toolkits for golf courses and counties.

Bowling Green will have two recognition ceremonies on Tuesday, November 17, during its football game. The first will be a formal presentation/recognition before its football game and the second, an on-field recognition with two NWS employees during the game. ESPN2 was scheduled to televise the game and the lightning presentation, promoting not only the university but lightning safety.

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## Good Works Gains Good Words

By [Corey King](#), Emergency Response Specialist, NWS Bismarck, ND

This fall, the North Dakota Emergency Management Association (NDEMA) presented NWS Bismarck and Grand Forks with the NDEMA Achievement Award for outstanding contributions to the field of emergency management.

NDEMA President Karen Kempert said, "This award for the two National Weather Service offices serving North Dakota is well deserved and long overdue. The offices increased the number of awareness notifications of high impact significant events, supported partners in community planning efforts, and developed a strong social media presence. Their efforts are helping to ensure that North Dakota is weather ready."

The accompanying award letter stated, "Emergency managers utilize information from the National Weather Service in a variety of ways. The direct involvement and commitment in local emergencies and disasters, rural fires and spot forecasts, early information on high impact weather events in all seasons, webinars, hydrologic advice and forecasts, and the North Dakota Partners Briefing web page, have all enhanced the EM-NWS partnership in North Dakota."

NWS Bismarck Meteorologist in Charge Jeff Savadel said, "It is an honor that the association recognized the hard work of the Bismarck and Grand Forks staffs in this way. It means a lot that our commitment to the National Weather Service mission and the Weather-Ready Nation initiative is being recognized by our core partners in North Dakota."



*NWS Bismarck WCM John Paul Martin (left) and Emergency Response Specialist Corey King show the office's EM Achievement Award.*

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**Aware**

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