



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.

October 2015

Color Coding Keeps Search and Rescue Exercise on Track

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

NWS Bismarck Lead Forecaster Jeff Schild and Emergency Response Specialist Corey King took part in a full scale search and rescue exercise held by Dunn County Emergency Management (EM) in the picturesque North Dakota Badlands. The exercise stressed the importance of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the five major functional areas: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics and Administration/Finance.

Color coding was a unique aspect of the exercise. Organizers gave each participant a color appropriate t-shirt to wear designating a functional area. This system helped participants visualize interactions among the various functional areas as the exercise unfolded.

Jeff and Corey provided a weather scenario and briefing as part of the planning group. Although the weather was ideal, the scenario planned by Jeff and Corey included possible afternoon thunderstorms. In addition to the onsite Impact Decision Support Services, Jeff and Corey demonstrated the NWS Spot Request program, which offers EMs the ability to request a forecast for a specific location.

Dunn County EM Denise Brew commented, "It's great to have such a strong relationship with the National Weather Service. The fact the NWS sent participants to our exercise lets us know they are a partner we can count on when it matters most."



NWS Bismarck, ND, Forecaster Jeff Schild (back right) and other members of the Emergency Operations Center.

New TsunamiReady® Program Guidelines

By [Rocky Lopes](#), National TsunamiReady Program Coordinator

After a lengthy, intense review process, in October the NWS National Tsunami Program Office released new [TsunamiReady Program Guidelines](#), which determine whether a site is eligible for TsunamiReady recognition. The national staff drafted the changes in conjunction with Meteorologist-in-Charge Troy Nicolini, NWS Eureka, CA. To ensure a smooth transition, NWS National Tsunami Program staff worked closely with the NWS regions, local offices, outside experts and local stakeholders. Once the guidelines had gone through this rigorous process, NWS opened a public comment period and received only two comments, both complimentary.

The Tsunami Program staff then took the next step to ensure a smooth transition. In spring 2015, NWS Headquarters staff asked TsunamiReady community staff in North Carolina, California, Hawaii and Puerto Rico to review and pilot the new guidelines. Emergency managers (EM) in these communities were so enthusiastic about the proposed changes that they asked to use the revised guidelines immediately. Based on this positive feedback, the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP) voted to endorse the revised guidelines.



The NWS Tsunami Program staff then tackled updating the TsunamiReady (only) application, a key companion to the guidelines. After extensive review, NWS submitted the form to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Paperwork Reduction Act approval, a required step. The program was prepared for the OMB review and approval to take up to one year, based on advice and past experience. The form was approved in 3 days! Why such a short time? Because the process used to engage stakeholders, get public comment, conduct pilot tests, communicate openly and transparently and respond to suggestions is what OMB looks for to ensure stakeholders are not surprised.

The national TsunamiReady implementation team is now developing supporting materials and procedures for WCMs and partners to help with the transition from the old to the new application. NWS is sensitive to concerns about transition for existing TsunamiReady communities. The switchover will not happen overnight.

An updated national TsunamiReady website will be launched by the end of November. If you have questions, please contact your local Tsunami Point of Contact or [Rocky Lopes](#), National TsunamiReady Program Coordinator.

Legislators Gain Insight into NWS Warning Systems

By [John Lewis](#), Meteorologist, NWS Little Rock, AR



State legislators and other attendees at the meeting assembled in the NWS Little Rock conference room.

On September 21, 18 state legislators in the Arkansas Joint Committee on Advanced Communications and Information Technology visited NWS Little Rock for a presentation on how the NWS communicates with state and local officials, as well as a look at the office's technological capabilities.

Meteorologist in Charge Steve Drillette gave a presentation focusing on communication devices such as NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, the National Warning System and the Mutual Aid Channel Pool. The latter two are phone systems used to disseminate watch and warning information for extreme events. Drillette showed how these devices were employed during the tornado event of April 27, 2014, when an EF-4 monster twister ripped through the communities of Mayflower and Vilonia, AR.

Arkansas State Rep. Steven Meeks commented, "One of the primary tasks of our committee is communications

across the state. My goal in holding the meeting at the National Weather Service, with the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management, was to get a better understanding of the state of communications between federal, state, and local officials in the critical hours following a tragedy. As the State Representative of Vilonia, which was hit by tornados in 2011 and 2014, I've seen firsthand the importance of being able to predict and communicate warnings out to the public. For my part I was impressed to learn all the different ways the NWS communicates with the public and local officials. It was apparent the office worked to be proactive and looked to embrace all and new forms of communications."

Better Partnering with State Homeland Security Office

By [Vern Preston](#), WCM, NWS Pocatello, ID

Brigadier General Brad Richy, Director of the Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security (IBHS), visited NWS Pocatello to promote the partnership between the two agencies and meet our new Western Region Director, Dr. Grant Cooper. NWS Pocatello used the opportunity to expand this strong relationship. Past projects include:

- ◆ Partnering to promote the expansion of NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) coverage
- ◆ Hosting NWR transmitters in state communications facilities
- ◆ Distributing severe weather safety and planning guides to dispatch centers and schools statewide
- ◆ Supporting the implementation of the NWS StormReady program



WCM Vernon Preston thanks IBHS Steve Hayward for years of training collaboration.

Eastern Training Coordinator Steve Hayward worked extensively with NWS Pocatello staff to develop tabletop, functional and full-scale exercises for winter storms, flooding, fires, HAZMAT releases, dam breaks, and dust storms.

During the visit, NWS Pocatello staff provided a short orientation to forecast operations and highlighted examples of partnerships with decision makers in the wildfire, transportation, hydrology and EM communities.

Richy praised NWS for its dedication to community safety and stressed the positive impact of the collaboration between the NWS and Idaho Transportation Department, which resulted in the development of a prototype NWS travel weather web page.

The visit also offered the opportunity to recognize two retiring IBHS employees whose dedication and innovation directly support the NWS mission, Ken Fagnant and Steve Hayward.

Southeast Area Field Officer Ken Fagnant was instrumental in getting the first NWR expansion site in eastern Idaho for which he was awarded the NWS Mark Trail Award in 2003. Ken also promoted the Storm Ready program, succeeding in having all counties within his service area recognized as StormReady. In addition, he routinely partnered with us to promote weather safety and emergency preparedness at public events. IBHS

Meeting Unique Needs of Tribal Emergency Managers

By [Vern Preston](#), WCM, NWS Pocatello ID

Wes Jones, the local Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Department of Public Safety Director invited Pocatello WCM Vernon Preston to take part in the second annual National Tribal Emergency Management Conference this year. Over the past several years, NWS Pocatello and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes have shared ideas on how the NWS could better partner with a sovereign Tribal Indian Nation.

Based on this relationship, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes became the first StormReady Tribal Nation in Idaho. During the StormReady process, Jones explained that some NWS products did not meet the needs of tribal members. He worked with the Pocatello staff to modify the local AWIPS system so it would display geographic locations tribal nation members would recognize in the text and display of NWS warnings.

“Tribal members know their location within the reservation boundaries by their lodge and district,” said Jones. Our partnership with the National Weather Service to list these locations within their warning statements helps tribal members who live within the reservation to determine if their location is within the hazard area. Based on these warnings, they can react faster to warnings that could save lives.”

Jones added, the mission of [National Tribal Emergency Management Council](#) is to have “Tribal Nations come together to promote sovereignty, self-determination, self-reliance and self-governance. In forming partnerships with other governments and the private sector, we can ensure the voice of Indian Country is heard and respected. Our goal is to continue to grow, learn and share our knowledge throughout Indian Country as we strive to improve nation-to-nation relationships between tribes and other governments.”



A display booth at the [National Tribal Emergency Management Council](#) meeting featured the Weather-Ready Nation resiliency message and weather preparedness and information.

Aware

NOAA's National Weather Service, Analyze, Forecast and Support Office
Managing Editor: [Melody Magnus](#), Editors: [Donna Franklin](#), [Nancy Lee](#)
Aware online: www.weather.gov/os/Aware/ ISSN 1936-8178
Subscribe/Unsubscribe www.weather.gov/os/Aware/awarelist.shtml