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 2019**

## Should NWS Change Wording on Flash Flood Wireless Emergency Alerts?

*By Kate Abshire, Hydrologist, NWS, Water Resources Services Branch, Silver Spring, MD*

The NWS is requesting comments on proposed changes to Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) Wording for Flash Flood Warnings (FFW) until November 10, 2019. Enabling WEA alerting for higher impact Flash Flood Warnings is a secondary step to implementing Impact-based Warnings (IBW) for FFWs.

NWS has been gradually implementing the reformatting of FFWs into a bulleted format. In December, this implementation will be complete. The consistent, bulleted format provides easily readable information describing flash floods, the source of the information (e.g., radar, gage, trained spotter, emergency manager) and a brief description of the hazard impact.

The flash flood IBW messages include machine-readable tags to clarify the flash flood damage threat, source information and details about the cause of the event. Currently, WEAs are issued for all FFWs. In December, after all NWS forecast offices are issuing FFWs in the IBW format, FEMA will only issue FFW WEAs with a damage threat tag of "Considerable" or "Catastrophic." NWS is asking for your comments on this proposed new WEA wording for FFWs. A sample of a proposed WEA Message for FFWs with a FLASH FLOOD DAMAGE THREAT tag of Considerable follows:


*Flooding during Hurricane Matthew in the Florida panhandle.*

### English Message (Short)

NWS: FLASH FLOOD WARNING this area til 11:00AM EDT. Avoid flooded areas.

### Spanish Message (Short)

SNM: AVISO DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS hasta 11:00AM EDT. Evite areas inundadas.

### English Message (360 Characters)

National Weather Service: A FLASH FLOOD WARNING is in effect for this area until 11:00AM EDT. This is a dangerous and life-threatening situation. Do not attempt to travel unless you are fleeing an area subject to flooding or under an evacuation order.

### Spanish Message (360 Characters)

Servicio Nacional de Meteorologia: AVISO DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS en efecto para esta area hasta las 11:00AM EDT. Esta es una situacion peligrosa y amenaza la vida. No intente viajar a menos que sea para abandonar un area propensa a inundaciones o bajo una orden de desalojo.

A sample of a proposed WEA Messages for FFWs with a FLASH FLOOD DAMAGE THREAT tag of "Catastrophic" follows:

### English Message (Short)

NWS: FLASH FLOOD EMERGENCY this area til 11:00AM EDT. Avoid flooded areas.

### Spanish Message (Short)

SNM: EMERGENCIA DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS hasta 11:00AM EDT. Evite areas inundadas.

### English Message(360 Characters)

National Weather Service: A FLASH FLOOD EMERGENCY is in effect for this area until 11:00AM EDT. This is an extremely dangerous and life-threatening situation. Do not attempt to travel unless you are fleeing an area subject to flooding or under an evacuation order.

### Spanish Message(360 Characters)

Servicio Nacional de Meteorologia: EMERGENCIA DE INUNDACIONES REPENTINAS en efecto para esta area hasta las 11:00AM EDT. Esta es una situacion extremadamente peligrosa y amenaza la vida. No intente viajar a menos que sea para abandonar un area propensa a inundaciones o bajo una orden de desalojo.

There will be no change to the information included in the FFW segment header block, including the Valid Time Event Code (VTEC) and Hydrologic VTEC (H-VTEC) strings nor will there be a change to the criteria for warning dissemination through other systems (e.g., NOAA Weather Radio, Emergency Alert System on radio and TV broadcasts). You find information defining the flash flood damage threat, source information and causative event, along with examples of FFWs in IBW format in the Product Description Document. Send comments on the change to Kate Abshire by November 10.

## Hydrology Workshop Sparks Innovation and Connection

*By **Tanja Fransen**, MIC, NWS Glasgow, MT*

NWS offices in Glasgow and Billings, MT, hosted the Eastern Montana Hydrology Workshop September 11—13, 2019. A real-time multi-day precipitation event at the start of the week allowed greater discussion and collaboration in real-time.

Shawn Carter from the NWS National Water Center (NWC), took part in the workshop, and was able to learn more about the unique area hydrology of Missouri River headwaters and basin. Shawn coordinated with NWC staff to

*Participants from the Eastern Montana Hydrology Workshop on Day 2 at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Fort Peck Interpretive Center.*

generate real time products and was able to see how WFOs may use these products to brief deep core partners. A staff member from the Alberta River Forecast Centre in Edmonton, Canada, saw the social media posts of the workshop and reached out to the organizers. This contact resulted in a 30-minute conference call on the last day of the workshop. Some of the main takeaways from the workshop include:

- Using "Victim to Hero" storytelling to help people prepare for floods and drought.
- Obtaining LIght Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data collected to support further investigation of flood inundation mapping capability.
- Introducing the U.S. Geologic Survey mobile ice jam reporting page through a Montana Silver Jackets funded project. This project has the potential to be implemented nationwide if we can better connect developers with NWS IT resources to get the reports to alert within Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) and NWSChat
- Refining or creating flood contact email lists for use across County Warning Areas and regional Boundaries. NWS should expand the successful Yellowstone River experiment held last spring in other basins, with all the WFOs sharing the management of the database.
- Starting research to investigate correlations between ice jam events and Accumulated Freezing/Thawing Degree Days to provide outlooks on ice jam potential and severity in a given season.

## NWS Provides Decision Support to Core Partners During Great Texas Balloon Race

*By **Chris Nuttall**, WCM, NWS Shreveport, PA*

*Reprinted courtesy of the **Great Texas Balloon Race website**.*

The 42nd annual Great Texas Balloon Race was held last July at the East Texas Regional Airport near Longview, TX. This Balloon Federation of America event has included the U.S. National Championship competition. The event attracts competitive hot air balloon pilots from across the world. Balloon flights are held each day with changes to the launch and landing sites. Live concerts and balloon glows during the first two nights draw crowds estimated near 40,000 people.

In response to a request from Gregg County, TX, Emergency Management, NWS Shreveport, LA, Meteorologist Chris Nuttall and Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) Charlie Woodrum deployed to the event. The two meteorologists provided 2 days of onsite Impact-based Decision Support (IDSS) inside the Gregg County Mobile Command Post. Support included regular briefings and weather watch activities. Other partners involved with the event included the Gregg County Sheriff's Office and the Longview Fire Department.

In past years, weather hazards impacting safety of race spectators and participants included severe thunderstorms, heavy rainfall, excessive heat, and strong winds. In 2019, the main impact was wind, which several times quickly changed direction and speed due to outflow boundaries from distant thunderstorms.

The event also provided an opportunity for NWS Shreveport meteorologists to showcase some of the capabilities the office can provide for both onsite and remote IDSS support, including handheld anemometer measurements, NWSChat, the Weather Archive and Visualization Environment, the Enhanced Data Display, and how to request SPOT forecasts and HYSPLIT dispersion runs.

## Different, Different World Workshop Targets Needs of Deaf Community

*For more information, **Steve Pfaff**, WCM, NWS Wilmington, NC*

*From left, NWS Wilmington, NC, Electronic Systems Analyst Mike Perdue and NWS Charleston, SC, Administrative Support Assistant Julie Packett learn about how facial and body expressions are an important part of ASL from Deaf Services Specialist Daisy Rivenbark and Telecommunications Consultant NC DSDHH Wilmington Regional Center Gideon Friant.*

According to Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, an estimated 600,000 people in the United States are deaf and 13 percent experience some level of hearing loss. American Sign Language (ASL) is the third most used language in the United States. As a result, it's imperative for NWS to continue developing relationships with deaf and hard of hearing partners to increase resiliency and promote inclusion within the communities we serve.

In recognition of Deaf Awareness Month, in September, WFO Wilmington, NC, hosted a "Different, Different World" workshop with Weather Ready Nation Ambassadors from the North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NC DSDHH) Wilmington Regional Center. The event also included staff from WFO Charleston, SC, ASL interpreters, and representation from the NC DSDHH Raleigh Regional Center.

The Different, Different World workshop consisted of multiple exercises designed to simulate deaf and deaf/blind challenges. Exercises included deaf/blind simulations, weather related ASL translations, lip reading, teletype (TTY) and other deaf scenarios.

The workshop included a powerful presentation by Daisy Rivenbark, Deaf Services Specialist NC DSDHH Wilmington Regional Center, about deaf culture and the history of ASL.

In addition, WFO Wilmington WCM Steve Pfaff presented a group exercise focusing on communication challenges. Specifically, to survive the scenario, the participants had to infer the type of hazard and recommended actions communicated through an ASL reporter with no captioning.

The participants quickly realized they were in trouble when they had limited access to communications. Overall, the workshop exemplified the challenges the deaf and hard of hearing community face on a daily basis. The workshop greatly helped to increase deaf awareness while strengthening key partnerships with and within the deaf community.

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