



Q & A with NWS Raleigh Meteorologist James Danco



James Danco

Position: Entry Level Meteorologist

Education: Rutgers; Oklahoma

Hometown: Bridgewater, NJ

Where did you go to school and what was your NWS Career Path to get to NWS Raleigh?

I received my Bachelor's in meteorology from Rutgers University. For graduate school, I attended the University of Oklahoma where I received a Master's in meteorology. This is my first fulltime position with the NWS, but I was a summer volunteer intern at the NWS in Mount Holly, New Jersey, which provided me with valuable experience and greatly helped my transition to NWS Raleigh.

What got you into weather?

Like many others, weather is something I have always been fascinated by ever since I can remember. Even as a young child, I loved watching thunderstorms and snowstorms, and I read countless weather books. With each extreme weather event that I experienced, my interest in how these phenomena form and how to predict/track them continued to grow. Friends, family, and classmates eventually started looking to me as a reliable source for their weather forecasts. In high school marching band, if anyone wanted to know whether it was going to rain, or what the temperature was going to be like, I was always the person they asked!

What is your current role here at NWS Raleigh?

I am an Entry Level Meteorologist here at NWS Raleigh. I mainly work at the public service desk, where I am responsible for issuing various NWS climate and hydrology products, as well as ensuring the radar and NOAA weather radio are functioning properly. During significant



weather events, I assist in monitoring river levels and taking storm reports to verify the warnings we issue. As a new employee, another primary duty is to take many different training modules and shadow the upper-level meteorologists in the office. This allows me to learn everything I need to know about the NWS, and gain all the skills that I need to eventually become a successful forecaster!

What is your favorite type of weather to forecast?

I enjoy all types of weather, but my favorite type to track and forecast is winter weather. Growing up in New Jersey, I experienced plenty of winter storms. From a young age, I quickly became mesmerized by watching nor'easters rapidly strengthen as they tracked up the East Coast, and experiencing the resulting strong winds and heavy snow blanketing everything. Winter storms are one of the most challenging yet important types of weather to forecast accurately, because very small shifts in the rain/snow line can have such huge implications for the impacts many people experience.

What is the most challenging part of your job?

Currently, being a "sponge" and absorbing as much information as possible is probably the most challenging part of my job. There is so much to learn for someone entering the NWS for the first time, including all of the various products we issue, our many different computer programs and applications, good forecasting techniques, and much more. Lots of note-taking and hands-on practice are very important!

What is the most memorable weather event you have experienced?

Since I am from New Jersey, it would have to be Hurricane Sandy. At the time, I was a junior at Rutgers, and I remember gathering with my classmates as we watched the models show the threat as much as a week in advance. So many factors came together perfectly to cause Sandy to make that incredibly rare left turn directly into New Jersey, and to make it as destructive as it was. It was unbelievable for me to not only watch it unfold on weather maps, but to actually experience it firsthand. Sandy produced, by far, the worst winds and tree damage that I have ever experienced. Power outages and school closings lasted for at least a week. Many parts of the Jersey Shore experienced widespread devastation and were forever changed. The meteorological community also learned many lessons from Sandy, including how to better communicate the dangers of hurricanes to the public, even after they have begun transitioning to extratropical systems.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

When I am not working, I greatly enjoy spending time outdoors, which includes hiking, biking, swimming, and going to the beach. I also love to travel, see new places, and try new restaurants. This makes me eager to explore the many beautiful and fun attractions around North Carolina. I am also an avid fan of some sports, particularly football, and can always be seen rooting for the Oklahoma Sooners and Rutgers Scarlet Knights!