



NOAA's NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Western Region Notes

March 10, 2005

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Western Region Best Practices!

There are many innovative ideas surfacing from around the region and the agency. Please make sure you visit the Western Region Best Practices page and the National Best Practices page from time to time. There are a lot of good ideas, like "branding" our products. In addition, please remember to submit best practices from your office so that others may take advantage of your innovation!

Western Region MIC/HIC Meeting on the Horizon: Next week, Western Region's MICs, HICs, regional office senior management, and the NWSEO regional chair will convene in Portland, OR for the annual regional MIC/HIC workshop. A wide range of topics will be covered starting off with a look at the current and future budget status. Thanks to the planning committee for their efforts: Larry Dunn, Andy Edman, Michelle Schmidt, Harold Opitz, Elizabeth Morse, Jim Meyer, and Dee Wolf. I look forward to a productive three days!

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Statement of the Week: Our Statement of the Week comes from WFO San Diego, which issued this High Surf Advisory. Locations of potentially higher waves are clearly indicated. Additionally, the second paragraph calls attention to some of the less obvious but very real dangers posed by high surf conditions: rip currents and long-shore currents (both dangerous to people going in the water, especially non-swimmers) and increased potential for waves washing over rocks with little or no warning – a very dangerous situation for fishermen and beach goers. Good job San Diego!

WHUS46 KSGX 041008
CFWSGX

COASTAL FLOOD STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SAN DIEGO CA
200 AM PST FRI MAR 4 2005

CAZ042-043-042200-
ORANGE COUNTY COASTAL AREAS-
SAN DIEGO COUNTY COASTAL AREAS-
200 AM PST FRI MAR 4 2005

...HIGH SURF ADVISORY FOR SURF 7 FEET OR GREATER IN EFFECT UNTIL 10 AM PST SUNDAY...

A LARGE AREA OF WEST TO NORTHWEST SWELL WITH A PERIOD OF ABOUT 12 SECONDS WILL CONTINUE TO AFFECT THE COASTAL AREAS TODAY INTO SUNDAY. THE SWELL WILL CAUSE 4 TO 9 FOOT WAVES. OCCASIONAL SETS TO 10 FEET OR GREATER ARE POSSIBLE SATURDAY...ESPECIALLY ON THE WEST TO NORTHWEST FACING BEACHES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY.

DURING PERIOD OF HIGH SURF...VERY STRONG RIP CURRENTS ARE PRESENT WITH A STRONG ALONG SHORE CURRENT TO THE SOUTH. THESE VERY STRONG CURRENTS BRING DANGEROUS SWIMMING CONDITIONS. IT IS ALSO HAZARDOUS TO FISH OR OBSERVE WAVES FROM ROCKS OR EXPOSED COASTAL STRUCTURES...AS LARGE WAVES CAN SUDDENLY SWEEP ACROSS PREVIOUSLY DRY AREAS.

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Test Messages with Warngen: As we move toward spring Severe Weather Awareness Weeks, it is imperative that test SVR and TOR warning products include the proper format and VTEC coding. In order to have Warngen automatically send test messages in the correct format, it must be put into "TEST" mode. For now, the only way to do this it to set the d2d system clock back five seconds before starting Warngen. Create and disseminate your test warning(s); exit Warngen and reset the clock back to real time. Instructions for this procedure and other Warngen activities such as corrections, follow-ups, cancellations, and retransmissions are included on the VTEC website at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/vtec/>. NOTE: the procedure does not work during the first 1-4 seconds at the top of each minute (going back five seconds actually moves the time forward). A full Warngen test mode, which does not involve changing clock times, is being developed for a future AWIPS build. Always double-check the format and VTEC coding in the text window before issuing any test message.

It is highly recommended that Warngen focal points or other training coordinators take a few minutes to demo how to use Warngen in "TEST" mode to all staff members to reduce the number of inadvertent test messages issued as live warnings. Remember, any testing that uses live warning product headers must be well coordinated in advance, and please also make sure ANY test message has the proper test format in the MND header:

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TEST...product name...TEST
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE xxxxxxxx st
400 PM MST WED MAR 9 2005
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Any questions, please contact Craig Schmidt at MSD.

WFOs Boise, Billings, and Glasgow Complete Successful WBC Test: On March 9, WFOs Boise, Billings, and Glasgow successfully issued numerous Watch County Notification messages in coordination with SPC in a convective watch test. They did so using the Graphical Hazard Generator (GHG) tool in version 17.1 of GFE. All indications are that the test was very successful, with only one minor error noted. All offices handled cancellations, extensions, expirations, and multiple watches with ease. Here is a summary of the event from WCM Paul Flatt in Boise:

We had the MIC take the initial call and issue the initial WCN product for a TO and SV issued simultaneously. We simulated a shift change where the previous shift made no mention that watch products for our CWA were in effect. The next tester was the Service Hydrologist who ran the Hazard Recovery Tool because he couldn't believe a watch product was out and there was no mention of the watch in the briefing. The Hazard Recovery tool correctly built the hazard grid.

We then issued a series of WCN products where counties were cleared from the watch. We issued one product where we added a county back in that had been previously cleared. GHG correctly coded that county with an EXA code.

16 minutes prior to expiration of one of the watches we issued a CAN for all counties in one of the watches. 10 minutes prior to the second watch expiring we generated a product and GHG correctly coded an EXP for all counties in that watch.

When clearing counties we used several different methods to manipulate the grids.

Make Hazard Tool.

Pencil Tool to draw on the grid.

Map Edit areas to clear counties.

Delete the temporary hazard grid.

We used two individuals in our office on this test who have the least familiarity with GFE and GHG. Neither of them was given any advance notice that they would be tasked with doing this test. The MIC was working shift and did this as well as his regular forecast duties. The Service Hydrologist was taken off his desk, given GFE, and told to start clearing counties and otherwise manipulate the watches. Both of them (and a bystander) commented on how easy it is to manipulate the grids to generate the required product.

During actual watch events, we'd recommend briefing an oncoming shift about the watches...but this was a great test.

Seattle and Portland Participate in Tsunami Summit: The WCMs from WFOs Seattle and Portland participated in a "Coastal Tsunami Summit" on February 9, in Long Beach, Washington. Participants included congressional officials, state/local officials, members of the local response community, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the U.S. Coast Guard, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD), Washington State Community/Trade/Economic Development, and the Hoh and Quileute Tribal Nations. The summit provided a forum for all attendees to ask

questions, discuss issues, and provide recommendations related to tsunami preparation and response.

Discussions included the danger of a possible tsunami generated by an earthquake along the Cascadia Subduction Zone, located just off the Washington coast. In the event of a major earthquake there, a tsunami could be generated and hit the coast with very little lead time. As a result, people along the nearby coast would have little time to react. Additional discussions focused on the need for a strong public education program, stressing the need for all people in the danger area to move to higher ground immediately upon feeling the earthquake (and not wait for a formal tsunami warning to be issued). Additionally, the summit focused on tsunami hazard assessment tools, warning systems, alert and notification equipment/procedures, and resources to develop and maintain these efforts.



WFO Portland's MIC and WCM presents Lincoln City Officials the TsunamiReady and StormReady certificate.

Lincoln City, Oregon Receives TsunamiReady Certification:

On March 7, 2005, WFO Portland conducted a TsunamiReady ceremony in Lincoln City, Oregon to recognize Lincoln City as both TsunamiReady and StormReady. Lincoln City is the 16th community in the nation to receive the TsunamiReady certification and the first community in the nation to earn the TsunamiReady certification since the Indian Ocean tsunami tragedy. Several newspaper media from the area, as well as the local ABC television affiliate from Portland, covered the event.

Guest speakers at the ceremony included the principal scientist from Oregon Department of

Geology and Mineral Industries (DOGAMI), who produced the inundation maps for the Oregon Coast, the Lincoln County Emergency Manager, the City Manager for Lincoln City, the Mayor of Lincoln City, and WFO Portland MIC Steve Todd and WCM Tyree Wilde. MIC Steve Todd presented the certification and signs to the Mayor of Lincoln City as the finale of the ceremony.



Dennis Hall, Radio Program Manager, Program for the Blind and Disabled, demonstrates the station's operational capabilities to Brian McInerney.

Salt Lake City Staff Member Volunteers Time to Radio Reading Service:

Brian McInerney, Senior Service Hydrologist at WFO Salt Lake City, spends an hour each Wednesday, recording broadcasts for the Utah Radio Reading Service, a program of the Utah State Library Division, Program for the Blind and Disabled. Recently, Brian guided Dennis Hall, Radio Program Manager, on a tour of the Salt Lake City Office. Dennis, an admitted weather enthusiast, expressed his appreciation of the tour and Brian, stating "what a joy it is to work with him."

Brian is one of approximately 20 individuals, recording local and regional news articles for the Service. Also included are magazines articles, plus old time radio and special feature programs. The Radio Reading Service is available to approximately 1,200 patrons living along the Wasatch Front of northern and central Utah and in the Cedar City and St. George areas of southwest Utah. The programming, which features a weather segment each weekday, is broadcast daily on sidebands from KBYU-FM Radio in Provo and KREC-FM Radio in St. George. The broadcasts can be received only on specially tuned radio receivers, available to patrons of the Utah State Library for the Blind and Disabled. The receivers are loaned, free of charge, from the Library for the Blind.



(L to R) Norm Phelps and Tom Evans staff a booth at the Drexel Heights Community Safety Fair.

WFO Tucson Supports Community Safety Day:

Norm Phelps (Electronics Technician) and Tom Evans (WCM) from WFO Tucson recently participated in the second annual Drexel Heights Community Safety Day. The Drexel Heights Fire Department sponsored the "Safety Fair and Salsa Standoff" by providing safety demonstrations for kids and salsa tasting, benefiting the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Many were in attendance to help promote the event. Participants included fire districts from Tucson, safety officials from the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui Nations, the Red Cross, and the NWS.



WFO Medford Participates in Outdoor Recreation Show:

Ryan Sandler, WFO Medford WCM, along with Lead Forecaster Mike Stavish, and HMT Murray Orr, staffed a booth on February 25-27 at the Sportsmen's and Outdoor Recreation show near Medford. The booth included a real-time display of NOAA National Weather Service products via Medford's NWS web page. Pictured here is Mike Stavish, WFO Medford Lead Forecaster, handing out information on NOAA's "weather.gov" website to a customer.



WFO San Joaquin Valley Participates in Career Day:

WFO San Joaquin Valley sent representatives to a career day in Bakersfield, California. What made this event different was that it marked the WFO's (and Journey Forecaster Kevin Durfee's) 10th anniversary making such presentations at Beardsley Intermediate School. Pictured here are Meteorologist Intern Jeff Myers (left) and Kevin talking to a class of 8th graders about careers in meteorology.



Lewis County is StormReady: Lewis County and the city of Nezperce, Idaho, were recognized as StormReady at a ceremony at the Nezperce Court House on March 7. Officials from Nezperce, Kamiah, Craigmont, and Winchester were presented with special plaques and StormReady signs to recognize their important accomplishment.



Andy Bailey presents weather safety information at Las Vegas fishing show.

Boating Safety in the Desert?: Las Vegas WCM Andy Bailey and Forecaster Heather Davis gave four presentations on boating and weather safety at the Las Vegas “Bass Pro Shops Spring Fishing Spectacular” on March 5-6. The talks covered heat, lightning, and wind safety (as related to wind-driven waves), as well as NOAA All Hazards Radio and NWS weather information available on the internet.

Annually, nearly as many people die from weather related causes on Lake Meade as from Tornadoes in the entire state of Oklahoma. As a result, WFO Las Vegas is getting more active in boater safety education and outreach and will begin producing “lake wind advisory” products for the Lake Mead to Lake Havasu stretch of the Colorado River later this spring.



WFO Monterey Takes Part in Fisherman’s Swap Meet: WFO Monterey partnered with three other NOAA Agencies in supporting the “Small Boat Commercial Salmon Fishermen’s Association Swap Meet” at San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf on Saturday, March 5.

Pictured at left are: (L to R) David Soroka (WFO Monterey WCM), Mary Jane Schramm (Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuaries), Dayna Matthews (Office for Law Enforcement – NMFS), and Stephen P. Freese, (Sustainable Fisheries Division, Northwest Region – NMFS)

Aviation Program: The 2005 Montana Aviation conference was held in Butte, MT, March 3-5. The conference was sponsored by the Montana Aeronautics Division, and co-hosted by the Montana Airport Managers Association, Montana Pilots Association, Montana Aviation Trades Association, Montana Antique Aircraft Association, and Butte’s Bert Mooney Airport.

NOAA/NWS provided a booth for the conference which was staffed by WFOs in Montana. The Western Region attendees included Scott Carpenter (WFO Billings), Corey Bogel (WFO Glasgow), Jim Brusda (WFO Great Falls), Mike Kreyenhagen (WFO Missoula), and Scott Birch (WRH). The booth also allowed for outreach to a member of U.S. Senator Conrad Burns staff and Montana's Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger.

Scott Carpenter and Cory Bogel also gave an excellent presentation entitled, "Weather and Your Montana Flying". The presentation included information on NWS Products and Services as well as examples of weather patterns which have a significant impact on aviation interests in Montana.

HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION

Flood Safety Awareness Week: The first annual National Flood Safety Awareness Week kicks off on March 21st and runs through March 25, 2005. In anticipation of this special event, HCSD encourages all WFOs to provide a link under the "Latest News and Information" section of their homepage to the national Flood Safety Awareness Week web page (<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/floodsafety>). The goal of this campaign is to highlight some of the many ways floods can occur, the hazards associated with floods, and what can be done to save lives and property.

Each day during the week, a different element of the hydrologic program will be highlighted. Since hydrologic concerns vary, offices can choose which elements they prefer to highlight for their customers. Some of the topics offices are choosing to focus on include Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service (AHPS), Turn Around Don't Drown (TADD), Drought, Flood Safety, Flood Insurance Program, and Hydrologic Terms and Definitions.

In order to help coordinate activities and information, HCSD has compiled a resource web page available on the internal WR web server. This web page is available for your use at: http://ww2.wr.noaa.gov/hcsd/Hydro/Resources/Flood_Week.php. This site contains a variety of information such as links to national resources, sample Public Information Statements, and a place for WFOs to share their plans for the upcoming event. Updates are made as soon as new information or comments are received by the WFOs.

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

RFC and WFO QPF grids: During the last 6 months, SSD has been transmitting the CNRFC HAS QPF grids to the WFOs under the CNRFC umbrella. The grids are used as a first guess for the NDFD QPF grids, which can then be edited by the WFO forecasters. This emerged as a best practice during the WR SOO/DOH workshop. Kirby Cook has been working with the CBRFC and NWRFC to disseminate their grids. Testing at a few WFOs has begun and the grids will be available soon.

NOAA's Hydrometeorology Testbed: NOAA's Hydrometeorology Testbed (HMT) project is planning to deploy an array of sensors in the American River Basin to study cold season precipitation processes during the 2005-2006 winter season. HMT is designed to advance the state of science in hydrology and meteorology in a way that benefits operational offices in the NWS. A meeting will be held in Sacramento on March 18 to discuss the upcoming deployment with the CNRFC and WFO Sacramento. The western HMT is the first of NOAA's "research to operations" efforts. Eventually, there will be a HMT established for the east coast and central U.S. For more information about the HMT, visit their website at <http://www.hmt.noaa.gov>.

Forecast at a Glance Icon Team: The WR web icon team has been meeting to standardize the icons used with the Forecast at a Glance portion of our Total Forecast page. The team is composed of WR members, plus representatives from Southern Region and NWSHQ. A proposed set of Icons have been generated. The CIO office will be soliciting comments from the public within a few weeks. The information gathered will be used to finalize the icon set and seek approval for a national implementation.

Annual Web Site Certification: The annual web site certification is expected to be due April 1. All MICs/HICs will need to certify that their web pages are compliant with Department of Commerce policies.

http://www.osec.doc.gov/webresources/DOCWebPolicies_BestPractices.html

While we have not received final instructions from DOC, WR be issuing some draft instructions to the offices to help prepare for the deadline. Now is a good time to clean up any old, unneeded web pages.

Pacific Northwest Weather Workshop: WFO Seattle hosted the annual Pacific Northwest Weather Workshop on March 4-5. The workshop was sponsored by the NWS, University of Washington, and Puget Sound Chapter of the AMS.

The workshop theme was Probabilistic Prediction and the Estimation of Uncertainty. Over 100 meteorologists attended. Participation included forecasters from Pendleton, Portland, Salt Lake City, and Juneau. A large group from Environment Canada and University of British Columbia also attended.

For the first time, a U.S. Congressman gave a presentation at the workshop. Congressman Jay Inslee addressed weather instrumentation on tsunami buoys as well as bills before Congress on a U.S. led effort to enhance the worldwide tsunami warning program, federal support response to the lack of water in our region, and expected state drought declarations. He asked us to become more engaged in the global climate change science discussion with the public. Dr Frank Gonzalez, tsunami scientist at NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL) in Seattle, was the banquet speaker, addressing the recent Indian Ocean tsunami and tsunami threats in our region. The 32 presentations given at the workshop are posted on WFO Seattle's web site.

AWOC Training Deadlines: It is important that offices keep up with the training schedule. In WR, we have broken the two track deadlines up into first and second half of FY05. Completion will be tracked by LMS and reported in the WR Professional Development and Training plan.

March 31, 2005: Complete Core Track (WFO and CWSUs)

August 31, 2005: Complete Severe Weather Track (WFO and CWSUs)

TBD (probably March, 2006): Winter Weather Track (WFO and CWSUs)

For more info on AWOC and LMS go to: <http://wdtb.noaa.gov/courses/awoc/index.html>.

Suspension of University Assignment Program (UAP) call for new proposals:

Due to budget cuts, the University Assignment Program (UAP) request for proposal for the next academic year is being suspended.

Budget Cuts and new NWS Training Schedule: The budget cuts resulted in a reduction in the number of training courses offered for FY05. Mark Mollner has summarized the new training schedule and affected course assignments into a single document. This includes the most recent changes as announced by NWSHQ. The training course spreadsheet can be accessed on the WR intranet at: http://ww2.wrh.noaa.gov/ssd/FY05trainingslotsWR_TC.htm

Teletraining Session for March: The Virtual Institute for Satellite Integration Training (VISIT) and the Integrated Sensor Training Professional Development Series (ISTPDS) sessions are listed below. Offices can register for the teletraining sessions by sending email to: visit@comet.ucar.edu.

The teletraining calendar is at: <http://www.cira.colostate.edu/ramm/visit/ecal.asp>

The sessions for March are:

- *NEW* - Predicting Supercell Motion in Operations
(Intermediate, Mar 2, 10, 15, 23, 31)
- Modern Severe Weather Parameters
(Basic/intermediate, Mar 16, 29)
- Forecasting Convective Downburst Potential Using GOES Sounder Derived Products
(Basic, Mar 1, 10)
- Using GOES to Forecast Winter Storms Parts 1 & 2
(Intermediate, Mar 2, 3)
- RSO imagery with other Remote Sensor Data for Diagnosing Severe Weather across the CONUS (RSO 3)
(Intermediate, Mar 8, 9, 24, 25)

Training Reports: The bi-annual Western Region SOO/DOH Professional Development and Training (PD&T) and Intern Progress Reports are due from each WFO and RFC on April 15, 2005.

SYSTEMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

New member of SOD: Sue Packham will transfer to the Systems Operations Division in early April as the new Program Support Assistant. Sue previously worked at WRH and is currently the ASA at WFO Elko. She brings a wealth of knowledge and skills to this position. Welcome Sue!

New ISP: On February 28, the switch from the 1.5Mbit Internet Service Provider (ISP) to the Regional 45Mbit ISP was completed. Thank you to all for your patience during this transition. This switchover has eliminated the bottle neck in Internet access for the field offices.

AWIPS Test: Carl Bullock, of the Forecast Systems Laboratory (FSL), was at Western Region Headquarters on February 25 to test a new Notification Server for OB4.2. The installation and testing was successful. Dwight Williams (AWIPS RMS) and Andy Edman (SSD Chief) assisted.