

NOAA's NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Western Region Notes

JANUARY 13, 2005

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE



Cars are buried in snow at WFO Reno.

Congratulations to all Western Region offices (and that is nearly all of them) for the excellent service you have provided to your constituents over the past 2-3 weeks prior to and during the intense storms that have impacted our region.

Even as I am writing this, blizzard warnings are in effect in eastern Montana. The record breaking rains, flooding, and heavy snows in southern California; heavy rains and heavy snow in Arizona; heavy rains, extensive flooding, and heavy snows in southern Utah; extremely heavy snows in Reno

(WFO Reno recorded 81 inches) and other parts of Nevada; and heavy snows in the Sierras have kept nearly all our offices extremely busy for days. Your service has been outstanding, and considering the severity of these storms and their long duration, the death toll has been very low. Our offices provided a tremendous amount of information and we have seen complements from our users, including FEMA and the USGS as well as many others. At one point, Oxnard was issuing hourly updates on the weather and flooding. Many employees had a difficult time getting to work and many worked very long hours when others were unable to get in. We even had individuals at Reno who walked half a mile through waist deep snow to get to work.

You have performed your jobs in an outstanding manner, and it shows the great character of the people who work for the NWS in Western Region. Thanks for doing a great job of saving lives, preventing injuries, and keeping people out of harms way.

AROUND THE REGION



WFO Pendleton's Employee of the Quarter -

Mike Cantin: Mike Cantin, Journeyman Forecaster, has been named WFO Pendleton's first ever Employee of the Quarter for his contributions to the office Outreach and Diversity programs.

Because of Mike's efforts, the office Outreach program has expanded greatly with excellent progress made at area schools and colleges. In the

past three months alone, Mike has conducted over 20 talks at educational institutions across the Pendleton County Warning Area. He has also scheduled numerous outreach activities for himself and other staff members for months to come. Mike has worked equally hard to ensure that the office remains focused on diversity activities. The office ethnic supper and luncheon with members of the Confederate Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation were examples of big diversity-related successes. Mike's dedication and work ethic are paying big dividends to the office and the communities that WFO Pendleton serves. Congratulations, Mike, on a job well done!

WFO Elko Holds Diversity Training: As part of an office operating plan action to support the NOAA goal for organizational excellence and mission support, WFO Elko held a diversity training session on January 4 covering ways to improve communication and strengthen teamwork. Dianne Yancey from the Dream Support Network gave an interactive 4-hour presentation about personality profiles and ways to improve communication and teamwork between the different personality types. The training session was well-received by the staff, and feedback has been positive with interest in future related training. Most of the Elko staff members have not had the opportunity to attend training such as the Executive Leadership Seminar at NWSTC, and this type of activity is an excellent way to provide these employees with leadership and diversity training.

WFO Pocatello Reaches Out to Needy Families: WFO Pocatello delivered three turkeys and over three hundred dollars to the Idaho Food Bank to reach the less fortunate families and/or military service families during the holidays. The money will be used to purchase more turkeys.

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Statement of the Week: From Friday, January 7, to Tuesday, January 11, virtually every portion of the Western Region experienced some sort of significant weather, especially California! Floods and flash floods were common over southern California with rainfall totals in one location exceed 24 inches! Heavy snow fell over higher terrain especially the southern half of the region, and high winds accompanied the snow in many locations. Western Region WFOs did an OUTSTANDING job issuing statements, watches, and warnings well ahead of the storms. This week's Statement of the Week is just one of a very large number of products issued. The flood potential outlook issued by Joseph Dandrea of WFO San Diego provided an excellent "heads up" to the impending storms headed towards Southern California.

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ESFSGX

FLOOD POTENTIAL OUTLOOK
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SAN DIEGO CA
600 PM PST WED JAN 5 2005

CAZ042-043-048-050-055>058-060>062-060200-
ORANGE COUNTY COASTAL AREAS-

600 PM PST WED JAN 5 2005

...SIGNIFICANT WET PERIOD SETTING UP OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS...

FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS SEASON...A PERSISTENT SUBTROPICAL CONNECTION WILL BE DEVELOPING FROM THE CENTRAL PACIFIC INTO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AS A DEEP...COLD UPPER LOW SPINS OFF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST. SEVERAL DISTURBANCES WILL MOVE THROUGH THIS FLOW AND BRING PERIODS OF DRENCHING RAINS AND MOUNTAIN SNOWS. THESE SYSTEMS WILL BE WARMER THAN THE PAST FEW STORMS WITH THEIR ORIGINS IN THE GULF OF ALASKA... SO SNOW LEVELS WILL LIKELY BE HIGHER.

THE FIRST WAVE OF HEAVY PRECIPITATION IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN EARLY ON FRIDAY IN SAN BERNARDINO AND ORANGE COUNTIES...AND SPREAD SOUTH THROUGH THE DAY. STRONG WINDS ACCOMPANYING THIS SYSTEM ARE EXPECTED TO EXCEED 50 MPH ON THE UPPER COASTAL SLOPES. THE COMBINATION OF THESE STRONG WINDS AND A DEEP MOIST LAYER WILL CREATE GREATLY ENHANCED RAINFALL ON SOUTHWEST AND WEST FACING SLOPES. RAINFALL ON THESE SLOPES WILL LIKELY BE 3 OR 4 TIMES WHAT IS EXPERIENCED AT THE COAST. THERE MAY BE A BREAK IN THE ACTION...ESPECIALLY AT LOWER ELEVATIONS ON SATURDAY BEHIND THIS LEAD IMPULSE...BUT UPSLOPE... MOIST FLOW WILL CONTINUE IN THE MOUNTAINS AND LIGHT TO OCCASIONALLY MODERATE PRECIPITATION MAY PERSIST FOR SEVERAL DAYS. ADDITIONAL IMPULSES COULD BRING ENHANCED RAINFALL RATES IN ALL AREAS SATURDAY NIGHT INTO SUNDAY MORNING...AND AGAIN ON MONDAY NIGHT OR TUESDAY... BUT TIMING AND INTENSITY OF THESE SYSTEMS IS UNCERTAIN WHICH MAKES CONFIDENCE LOW IN ESTIMATING ADDITIONAL PRECIPITATION AMOUNTS. HEAVY RAIN ON ALREADY SATURATED GROUND WILL INCREASE THE FLOOD THREAT AGAIN FRIDAY. ROCK AND MUD SLIDES WILL AGAIN BE POSSIBLE...ESPECIALLY ON STEEP TERRAIN AND IN AND BELOW THE RECENTLY BURNED AREAS. IN ADDITION...URBAN...SMALL STREAM...AND RIVER FLOODING WILL BE POSSIBLE...INCLUDING THE SAN DIEGO RIVER. HEAVY SNOW AND WHITE OUT CONDITIONS COULD DEVELOP AT THE HIGHER RESORTS IN THE SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS BY EARLY FRIDAY WHERE A WINTER STORM WATCH MAY BE NEEDED.

THE INTENSITY OF THE RAIN WILL BE CRITICAL IN BURN AREAS AND OTHER AREAS PRONE TO FLOODING. PRELIMINARY PRECIPITATION ESTIMATES FOR FRIDAY ARE FOR 3/4 INCH SOUTH COASTAL...TO 2 INCHES OF RAIN IN THE NORTH COASTAL AND VALLEY AREAS...WITH 2 TO LOCALLY 5 INCHES IN THE MOUNTAINS AND FOOTHILLS. HEAVIEST RAINS WILL AGAIN BE ON THE

SOUTHWEST FACING SLOPES. ADDITIONAL RAIN IS LIKELY THROUGH EARLY NEXT WEEK. A FLOOD WATCH WILL LIKELY BE ISSUED BEGINNING ON FRIDAY.

A LARGE SWELL IS EXPECTED TO ACCOMPANY THE STORM...ALONG WITH WIND GUSTS TO NEAR GALE FORCE. THIS WILL CREATE HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS FOR SMALL CRAFT AND MAY RESULT IN SOME COASTAL FLOODING...SEE LAXMWSSGX.

ALL MARINE INTERESTS...PEOPLE PLANNING TRAVEL THROUGH SOUTHWESTERN CALIFORNIA...OR THOSE WHO LIVE NEAR AREAS THAT ARE SUBJECT TO FLOODING SHOULD STAY INFORMED AND LISTEN TO LATER FORECASTS ON THIS DEVELOPING STORM.

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JAD



SOO Dean Hazen provides a weather briefing to local officials.

WFO Pocatello Briefs Local Officials on Winter Storms: During the first full week of the New Year, WFO Pocatello conducted a special briefing to local media, Idaho State Police, Idaho Department of Transportation officials, and emergency managers concerning a significant winter storm approaching the area. There was an excellent turnout for the event. One TV station even did a live broadcast direct from the office. A second local TV station came out later in the day for additional coverage.

The staff developed their game plan on Wednesday, January 5, finalized it the following day, and kicked off the actual briefing on Friday, January 7. There were several reasons for conducting this special briefing. Following a Knight-Ridder press release earlier in the week, the staff detected confusion among customers regarding the forecast for the region, and they wanted to clarify the forecast and bring the focus back to southeast Idaho. Though it was not a holiday weekend, the staff also had several requests for weather forecast information from people making travel plans.

The staff used the following procedures and format: beginning Thursday, standard talking points were developed and passed along to affected operational staff. The talking points, developed by SOO Dean Hazen and Lead Forecaster Bob Survick, included storm timing information, precipitation type, and precipitation amount information. The intent was to keep information consistent among the staff.

WRH Participates in "Polygon Team" Meeting in Ft. Worth: Western Region Headquarters participated in a two-day "Polygon Warning Team" planning meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, January 5-6, 2005. This team is evaluating the concept of issuing

polygon-based warnings, in anticipation of improved service to customers. Initially, the Polygon Team is evaluating only “short fuse” warnings in this concept (Tornado, Severe Thunderstorms, Flash Flood, and Special Marine Warnings). An evaluation period is planned at selected test WFOs across the country in March and will continue through summer 2005. Seven Western Region WFOs will participate. During the evaluation period, county-based verification will continue, but a series of new metrics, designed solely for polygon-based warnings, will also be evaluated.

Alaska Airlines Rep Visits WFO Spokane: Betty Bollert, Director of Dispatcher Training at Alaska Airlines, visited WFO Spokane recently. She gave a briefing on dispatch operations at the airlines and how Alaska Airlines uses NWS products and services. She also shared some of the challenges their team of dispatchers and pilots faces flying passenger service in and out of such diverse places as Kodiak, Alaska and Los Angeles, California. Betty made a well received presentation at the Regional Aviation Conference in Seattle in October, and Spokane Aviation Focal Point Todd Lericos invited Betty to do a similar thing at the WFO. This turned into a great opportunity for forecasters to meet with an important customer and exchange ideas.

HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION



Dave Brandon (HIC) and Jeff Smith (Senior Hydrologist), both from the CBRFC participated in the annual meeting of the Colorado River Water Users Association in Las Vegas, on December 15-17, 2004. The Colorado River Water Users Association has been in existence for 55 years and is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, formed to plan, study, formulate, and advise on ways to protect and safeguard the interests of all who use the Colorado River.

Dave Brandon made a presentation to about 800 people in the plenary session focusing on the 2005 spring outlook for runoff into Lake Powell. The mission of NOAA, the NWS and the emphasis on water, weather, and climate were also presented. This is the third annual meeting where the CBRFC participated as a key speaker. This is the first year the CBRFC had a booth in the exhibit section. It was very well received and was a successful outreach activity to many users within the water community.

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

NWS/COMET Cooperative RFP Cancelled: Due to budget cuts, the NWS/COMET Outreach Program Request for Proposals (RFP) for 2005 Cooperative Projects has been cancelled.

Teletraining Sessions for January: The VISIT teletraining calendar for January can be found at: <http://www.cira.colostate.edu/ramm/visit/ecal.asp>. Sign ups for these sessions can be found at this URL.

Advanced Warning Operations Course (AWOC): The Advanced Warning Operations Course (AWOC) was launched in October by the Warning Decision Training Branch (WDTB). AWOC is the next course in the series that begun with the OSF WSR-88D “in residence” warning training of 1991-1997 and the WSR-88D Distance Learning Operations Course (DLOC) offered to new hires after 1997.

The intent of AWOC is to maintain, refresh, and advance the radar and warning skills of all NWS meteorologists, hydrometeorologists, and hydrologists in an effort to meet our NWS GPRA service goals and provide an effective forecast and warning service to all our customers.

AWOC Course Format: AWOC consists of three training tracks. The first track is known as the “Core Track” and provides training on Situational Awareness, Effective Office Warning Strategies, Data Quality, and Societal Impacts and Perception of weather warnings. The second track is the “Severe Track” and provides the latest information on Convective Storm Conceptual Models, Threat Assessment, Storm Interrogation Strategies, and WES Simulations. The third track is the “Winter Weather Track” which is under development and will be available in FY06.

Who should take the course:

WFOs

- **Meteorologists:** All operational forecasters who have completed the original 3 ½ week OSF radar course or DLOC are required to take all three tracks (Core, Severe Weather and Winter Weather)..
- **HMTs:** AWOC is optional, but encouraged. All HMTs are encouraged to take the “Core Track” at a minimum. HMTs involved with supporting the warning program, or are thinking about preparing to cross over to the 1340 series, are also encouraged to take the “Severe Weather Track”. It is delegated to local management to determine which training tracks the HMTs should complete.

RFCs

- A special “Hydrology Core Track” is being developed and will be available in February 2005. HAS and other hydrologists directly associated with the flood warning program are required to take this “Hydrology Core Track” only. The course is encouraged, but optional for others.

CWSUs

- CWSU meteorologists are required to take the “Core Track”. Since CWSU meteorologists should maintain basic radar skills, they are strongly encouraged to take the other two tracks.

New Employees

- Interns and other new employees in the above categories should take the WSR-88D DLOC course first, then AWOC. The AWOC Core and Severe Weather Tracks will be available in FY06 and beyond for attrition training (new intern training)

AWOC Training Deadlines: AWOC is composed of a set of web based modules, teletraining and a few WES training cases. 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)

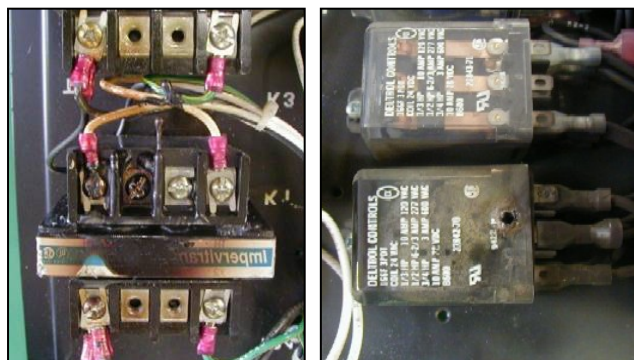
August 31, 2005 – Complete Hydrology Core Track (RFC's only)

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

Office Focal Points (AWOC Facilitators): The WDTB put an enormous amount of time and effort into producing AWOC. The WDTB provided AWOC and LMS facilitator training for one focal point (SOO, DOH or radar focal point) at each office. The facilitator plays the key role in helping the office with the completion of the WES cases. Each manager should allow time for the AWOC Focal Point to complete these activities.

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

SYSTEMS OPERATIONS DIVISION



Elko WFO - Transfer Switch: When ESA Herb Loell, reported a power problem at the Elko WFO, Facility Technicians quickly determined that commercial power had dropped one of the 480v legs. Minutes later, the power company crews correcting the problem accidentally sent raw power of at least 12,740 volts down the line. This extremely high voltage spike, acting

similar to a lightning strike, far exceeded the capabilities of the Surge Suppressor welding, melting and burning transformers and other components.

Tom Page, the Western Region's Power Transfer & Generator Expert was on the road within the hour leading a Quick Response Team. By opting to work with and around the live voltage inside the transfer switch and not take the site down, Tom Page and Grant Garner had commercial power restored and the final system checks completed a mere 4 ½ hours after arrival.

NWR Transmitter in Mojave Desert: A new NOAA Weather Radio transmitter is now on the air. The El Paso Mountain NWR, located in the western Mojave Desert, serves a growing desert community north of Los Angeles and a major trucking route. The area is also known for aerospace research and is the home of Edwards Air Force Base and China Lake Naval Weapons Center. The transmitter was installed by ET Ernie Duxbury, ESA Mike Brittain, and FET Jim MacLellan from WFO San Joaquin Valley.

Eureka Support: Joe Lachacz and Son Nguyen visited WFO Eureka. While in Eureka, Joe and Son assisted the office in WSR-88D issues and provided other electronic program support.

Monterey Bound: Kevin Bolton traveled to Monterey to assist the office in trouble shooting a persistent but intermittent problem with the Monterey ASOS.

Facilities in Kansas City: Sean Wink was invited and attended the Central Region Facilities Workshop on January 10-11, 2004 in Kansas City.

Western Region Web Farm: Since December 27, 2004, the Western Region web farm has, on every week day, experienced outgoing data transmission rates that nearly met or exceeded its previous record. This is more than double what used to be the normal day-to-day traffic. A new all time record was set Friday, January 7, 2005, when the traffic doubled the previous record. This past weekend (January 8-9) the outgoing transmission rates continued for 12 hour periods at rates near the previous record.