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Update on the Continued Flooding in the Dakotas and Minnesota

Widespread flooding continues over much of North and South Dakota, and northwest Minnesota. Most of North Dakota and western South Dakota continue to be under Flood Warnings. [Click here for the current hazards in effect for the country.](#)

The Missouri Basin River Forecast Center and North Central River Forecast Center resumed 24 hours of operations Monday night, April 13. NWS Central Region forecast offices, river forecast centers and the regional operations center continue daily conference calls with federal, state, county and city emergency managers and other partners involved in the flood fight.

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Don Berchhoff: From the Air Force to the NWS and AWIPS II

by Harriet Loeb

NWS Communications Office

Editor's Note: This is the third story in our AWIPS II series.

We've arranged a civilization in which most crucial elements profoundly depend on science and technology.

~~ Carl Sagan ~~

As an 8 year old, Don Berchhoff became fascinated with East Coast storms. His science teacher explained that in order to have snow, it has to be cold. Then, she added that in order to have cold, you have to have high pressure and high pressure means fair weather. Confused by her explanation, Berchhoff became interested in meteorology. He started keeping diaries and drawing weather maps he saw on television.

Berchhoff said, "I have always been a person of discovery, in learning and understanding why things are happening." His transition from a young boy of incurable curiosity to the Director of the NWS Office of Science and Technology (OST) included years of experience and learning. Twenty-four of these years were spent in the Air Force.

Berchhoff says he is foremost a forecaster. A native of New York, he received his degree in meteorology from the State University of New York at Oneonta. He holds two Masters Degrees: one in International Relations from National Defense University and another in Procurement and Acquisition Management from Webster University.

Berchhoff joined the NWS in the fall of 2008. He always wanted to be part of the NWS, but back in 1984, in the months leading up to graduation from college, there was a freeze on hiring at the Weather Service so he entered the Air Force.

"I told my wife it was only going to be a 4-year career [with the Air Force] and then I would get out. It turned into a 24-year career, and I gained tremendous experience with operational forecasting," said Berchhoff. "I helped build and lead a 180-person regional weather center responsible for providing weather forecasts, severe weather warnings and aviation forecasts for aircraft and bases across the Northeast United States."

Berchhoff's Air Force career also included six years of "hands on" field forecasting experience at Langley Air Force Base and with presidential Air Force One missions at Andrews. He is a specialist in East Coast weather and still gets excited over a cold air damming event or good snowstorm. Berchhoff was at Andrews Air Force Base where he led the installation of the first Doppler radar principal user processor and the Air Force's first automated weather

forecast production system, moving from maps on the wall to the computer monitors.

Berchoff believes we are in a seminal moment in meteorology. He believes decision makers are moving from a 'cope to and avoid' attitude to depending on weather forecasts.

As Berchoff said, "Weather information is becoming a commodity in demand because weather service capabilities, and most importantly our people, have taken forecast skill to a level where the information can be exploited. The work we are doing in terms of saving lives, protecting property and enabling economic prosperity is just going to get better over time."

As OST Director, Berchoff is responsible for the success of AWIPS II, which is one of the biggest efforts taking place in his office. He sees AWIPS II as the vehicle by which the NWS is going to migrate to the next generation forecast system.



Don Berchoff is briefed by Deirdre Jones, Director of the Systems Engineering Center in NWS's Office of Science and Technology. Jones is spearheading the design and production of AWIPS II, which will soon be the foundation for the delivery of more effective and accurate weather information. (photo, NWS Communications Office)

Berchoff says that AWIPS is going to be laying the architecture and infrastructure for the NWS to share information with users, through common operating standards and by putting the data out in the right formats so that other people can pull it into their systems. Having access to this data will help people make good decisions.

According to Berchoff, AWIPS II overhauls the underlying architecture that will provide greater flexibility for growth in the future. He said, "My number one priority is to deliver AWIPS II to the field with the least amount of pain possible." His goal is to field a well-tested, polished version for forecasters in the field.

Berchoff cautions that the transition of AWIPS II into field operations will have its challenges. He says he wants to keep the lines of communication open so things can be addressed quickly. Thus far, he has been impressed with the effort the regions and NCEP has put forth in helping to make AWIPS II fielding a success. This is also a big change for NCEP as they migrate from the legacy N-AWIPS system.

"I will tell you that I am very sensitive to the things that can go wrong. We are doing our best to understand what those possibilities are, and to mitigate them," said Berchoff. "If the field tells me this was a lot less painful than they imagined, I will feel that we succeeded."

[Click here to listen to what Don Berchoff, Director of the National Weather Service Office of Science and Technology, has to say about the future of the National Weather Service.](#)

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Conference Commemorates Tenth Anniversary of the May 3, 1999, Tornado Outbreak

Weather experts and those affected by the May 3, 1999, tornado outbreak including emergency managers, first responders and city officials will speak at the "May 3 Tornado Outbreak 10th Anniversary Event" sponsored by NOAA in Norman, OK, at the National Weather Center.

The historic 1999 outbreak saw over 70 tornadoes affect Oklahoma and southern Kansas, killing 48 people and causing \$1.1 billion in damage. Advance watches and warnings saved many lives, but the devastation wrought by an F5 tornado claimed many lives that day.

The day-long conference will include [four sessions](#) focusing on Science and Technology, Emergency Preparedness and Recovery, Community and Societal Impacts, and Individual Impacts: The People Speak.

Moderators of the event's sessions will be local television meteorologists Gary England from KWTW News9, Mike Morgan from KFOR News 4, and Rick Mitchell from KOCO News 5. Session speakers will discuss progress in weather warnings, community preparedness and recovery operations over the past 10 years. The importance of tornado warnings and safety, then and now, will be highlighted.