



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Directors, NWS Headquarters Offices
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FROM: David Caldwell
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SUBJECT: Guidance for NWS Support for Special Events

Every year, millions of Americans attend hundreds of thousands of outdoor events at tens of thousands of venues. These events include professional, amateur, and recreational sporting events of all types, outdoor festivals, and other kinds of gatherings that attract crowds large and small. When severe weather threatens the vicinity of these events, both participants and spectators are potentially exposed to hazards such as lightning, extreme temperatures, or tornadic activity. These situations pose a special challenge to event coordinators, public safety officials, and weather service providers.

Our National Weather Service (NWS) has an uncompromising commitment to public safety and works closely with public safety officials to ensure they understand the information provided in our products relating to hazardous weather. While NWS can provide support to public safety officials for special events, more specialized services are available from America's Weather Industry (private sector providers of weather services), such as customized consulting services organized and packaged to help make decisions about how to plan and run the event.

As in the past, NWS personnel need to respond judiciously to all requests for forecasting support from organizers of special events. Attached are policy principles which clarify our role in the support of such special events. The public was recently given an opportunity to review these policy principles and, based on this review, we are confident that we are operating in the best interests of our users.

NWS will continue its uncompromising commitment to public safety, and we will continue to work with the private sector to provide the Nation with optimum weather services.

Attachment



Principles for National Weather Service (NWS) Support of Special Events

General

- A “Special Event” is any event, one-time or repetitive, that can expose both participants and spectators to potentially hazardous weather events. Examples include, but are not limited to: balloon races, horse races, parades, automobile races, golf tournaments, state fairs, professional/collegiate and similar sporting events, outdoor concerts, etc.
- “Organizers” includes those who create, organize, and/or operate such Special Events.
- NWS has an uncompromising commitment to public safety.
- NWS is committed to its public/private partnership and is working with America’s Weather Industry¹ to provide the Nation with optimum weather services, including services for Special Events.
- NWS personnel will respond according to NWS policy guidelines to requests for forecasting support from Special Event organizers.
- NWS personnel should refer Special Event organizers to standard NWS dissemination systems (e.g., NOAA Family of Services, NOAA Weather Wire Service, NOAA Weather Radio, and NWS Internet web pages/servers) for NWS watches, advisories, warning, and short-term public forecasts which may satisfy some of their hydrometeorological information needs.
- NWS partners in America’s Weather Industry may provide specialized weather support including but not limited to customized weather information, warning, weather, radar and communication devices, and/or consulting services to Special Event Organizers which are organized, structured, tailored, and packaged to help make decisions about how to plan, run, and manage Special Events for the management of the event and its participants and spectators. NWS personnel should refer to this statement in explaining to Special Event Organizers and emergency managers what the NWS role is and what America’s Weather Industry can do, and refer to the NWS web site pages (<http://weather.gov/im>) that list these American Weather Industry resources.
- If a special event has been designated a “National Special Security Event” by the Department of Homeland Security (e.g., Inauguration, Democratic/Republic National Conventions, certain international summits), support by NWS is dictated by law [PDD 62; P.L. 106-544]. Likewise, full and prompt cooperation and support for an event may be required under the National Response Framework [HSPD-5, 20]. This does not exclude support from America’s Weather Industry, i.e., NWS can meet its responsibilities through cooperation with America’s Weather industry — not just by providing the support directly — much as was done for the Salt Lake City Olympic Games.
- Responsibility for following policy on Special Events rests with NWS management at all levels.

¹ America’s Weather Industry includes all elements of the private sector (including media, consultants, equipment providers, etc.) which provide services to the public in the areas of climate, water, and weather. The term does not exclude foreign-owned companies which provide services to the American public.

What NWS Personnel Should Do:

- Publicize to Special Event Organizers the various methods and sources, both public and private, where official NWS forecasts and warnings can be accessed for the benefit of the general public, including Special Event Organizers and participants, and the fact that enhanced support, including customized and highly localized forecasts and warnings, may be provided through America’s Weather Industry.
- Work with the firms from America’s Weather Industry chosen by Special Event Organizers to assure access to local NWS weather warnings and forecasts that affect life and property. Interaction with all such firms should be carried out in a uniform and consistent manner for similar events.
- Promptly inform emergency managers and, when urgently required for public safety, Special Event Operators, when weather conditions may threaten life or property during such Special Events. For the most part, standard NWS products are expected to meet this need.
- Where appropriate, inform emergency managers when weather conditions may impact emergency management decisions during such Special Events.
- In accordance with NWS Instruction 10-401, NWS personnel may provide a site-specific forecast upon request of any legally constituted public safety official who represents that the forecast is essential to public safety (e.g., due to the proximity of a large concentration of persons). A “public safety official” is an employee or contract agent of a government agency at any level (federal, state, local, tribal, etc.) charged with protecting the public from hazards of whatever origin or hazards influenced by weather conditions such as hazardous material releases.
- Use Special Events as an opportunity to provide outreach and educational support highlighting our core mission to save lives and protect property. This support can take the form of staffing booths to distribute hydrometeorological preparedness and safety materials, and display and explain NWS products and services. However, NWS personnel will not provide routine weather briefings supporting the event (see below).
- Work with large event venue management on the implementation of NWS' StormReady® and TsunamiReady™ programs.

Beyond the Scope of NWS Personnel²

- NWS personnel will *not* provide specialized, site-specific forecasts or direct forecasting support to Special Event organizers.
- NWS personnel will *not* provide specialized weather support and customized consulting services to Special Event organizers, organized and packaged to help make decisions about how to plan, run, or manage the event.

² Unless required to uphold federal laws in supporting “National Special Security Events” and other National Response Framework activities or when urgently required for public safety.