

Pilot Projects Help Build a Weather-Ready Nation™



The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Weather-Ready Nation initiative is about building community resilience to reduce vulnerability to extreme weather and water events. NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) is transforming its operations to work more closely with its public and private sector partners to make fast, smart decisions to save lives and livelihoods.

Six Pilot Projects

NWS, in partnership with the National Weather Service Employees Organization, launched six community-based pilot projects in early 2012:

- **Washington, DC** - Decision support in an urban region
- **New Orleans, LA** - Decision support in a coastal region
- **Fort Worth, TX** - Decision support at a regional level
- **Silver Spring, MD** - Decision support at a national level
- **Tampa, FL** - Integrating environmental decision support
- **Charleston, WV** - Integrating emerging technologies into warning services

The Weather-Ready Nation pilot projects enhance the protection of lives and livelihoods through three key elements of the projects:

- Emergency Response Specialists who are trained in both meteorology and emergency response
- Partnerships with emergency management officials and other federal, state and local partners
- Innovative technologies that improve delivery of information

Improving Decision Support

Understanding the needs of emergency managers *before* an event is vital. Emergency Response Specialists (ERS) receive specialized training, **often from the very partners they support during emergencies**. In addition, ERS participate with partners in joint exercises where NWS provides mock briefings of simulated severe weather events. Based on these conversations and exercises, pilot projects are building “catalogs” of criteria that guide when and how NWS services would be most valuable.

Pilot projects also are creating new approaches for delivering information to emergency managers and other governmental partners. Pilot project personnel share these experiences and approaches across the NWS, including enhanced training, to extend the benefits of the projects.



Decision Support During Events

ERS provided decision support services for several high-profile events in 2012:

- Independence Day Celebration on the Mall (Washington, DC)
- War of 1812 Bicentennial “Sailabration” Celebration (Baltimore, MD)
- Republican (Tampa, FL) and Democratic (Charlotte, NC) National Conventions
- Mardi Gras, Navy Week, and the Final Four Basketball Tournament (New Orleans, LA)

In all these cases, large numbers of people were exposed to the elements, and ERS were able to provide timely and accurate information about weather threats to help ensure safety.

Decision Support Services Example

Thousands of people were lined-up to enter the Superdome for the NCAA Final Four tournament.

Based on accurate and timely weather information, officials opened the Superdome early to allow the spectators to enter and avoid exposure to severe storms.

Severe Weather Decision Support

Services from the pilot projects were perhaps in greatest need during three tropical systems that impacted the United States: Tropical Storm Debby, Hurricane Isaac, and Hurricane Sandy. During all three events, project personnel worked closely with local, state and federal government officials, often staffing emergency operations centers 24×7, to protect the public from the storms’ impacts. Pilot project personnel provided officials and media with accurate, timely information on the arrival and severity of the storms, including wind, tornadoes, rainfall, waves, and storm surge.

Innovative Tools

Pilot projects are delivering information to partners in improved graphics and briefing techniques. New display technologies allow NWS personnel to overlay important observations and models with geographic and infrastructure information and access key information from remote locations. Pilot projects are also informing their partners through new communication technologies. The Tampa, FL, pilot is protecting public safety by issuing experimental beach hazard statements that include risks from harmful algal blooms. NWS is also working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to better incorporate NWS information into their displays.

Transformative Change

Pilot projects will continue to provide decision support services, while developing measures of success and approaches for sharing experiences, methods, and technologies across the NWS – helping America become a Weather-Ready Nation.

For More Information

For information about pilot projects, contact Kevin Scharfenberg, NWS Pilot Program Manager, at kevin.scharfenberg@noaa.gov.

To learn more about the Weather-Ready Nation initiative, visit the WRN web site at www.noaa.gov/wrn.



"The National Weather Service being here has been gold. It has definitely helped to save lives..."

Colonel Lee Smithson, Mississippi Air National Guard (after working with NWS during Hurricane Isaac)