



The National Weather Service Falls Short - Yet Again - on Forecasting and Communications Technology

(June 3, 2014) The National Weather Service's refusal to innovate sets the agency further behind worldwide weather warnings technology and communications. The Australian government's release of weather applications for public use has NWS employees dismayed in their own agency's refusal to allow innovation and advances in technology for our nation's public access.

[The Australian government announced last week](#) it is releasing weather apps for public use following demand for further engagement from the public. Users of the mobile site will be able to access weather information, forecasts, warnings and radars. "This is exactly what we have been pressing the National Weather Service for since the early 2000s," said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. "Time and again we are asked when the National Weather Service is going to create weather apps, yet the agency's refusal to innovate has put us behind Europe in weather forecasting technology and now we're lagging globally when it comes to disseminating the warnings."

National Weather Service created weather apps would provide the public with more immediate warnings and information directly from NWS. The intent is not to compete with the current apps but to complement the communications effort by offering free consistent weather apps to the public. Research shows that people are more likely to respond to warnings and watches when they hear those alerts from multiple trusted sources.

"The key to protecting lives and property is consistent and accurate warnings. If the NWS uses apps to disseminate their watches and warnings, the public will receive the information directly from the source," said Sobien. "Working with our private sector partners, NWS apps will reach a broader range of the public, promote consistent and accurate warnings, and communicate those warnings more effectively."

The National Weather Service abandoned its plans and prohibited employees' work on creating weather apps for public use in [a 2011 letter from NWS Deputy Director Laura Furgione](#). In the letter, Ms. Furgione cites the desire to avoid duplication of what is "readily available in the marketplace."

The Australian government faced the same dilemma and determined the bureau would offer forecasts sooner, and with greater accuracy for the user's location. "The National Weather Service's lack of confidence in our employees' ability to innovate is not only frustrating, but it is also holding our forecasting back on a global scale," said Sobien. "The world is advancing

weather forecasting technology leaps and bounds beyond the NWS; meanwhile, our agency is struggling with computer glitches and getting forecasts out to major cities during severe storms.”

On May 22, a National Weather Service telecommunications outage at multiple forecast offices prohibited and delayed products, including severe thunderstorm warnings, from being disseminated to the public. Weather forecast offices alerted the public and emergency management officials through social media, email and phone calls.

“Whether it’s the communications glitch last month or the lag in technology, National Weather Service leaders need to look forward, to be more nimble and to innovate – if we stay static, we’re going to fall behind in our mission and put lives at risk,” said Sobien.

-NWSEO-

**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.
We are NWSEO.**