



Statement from the Association of Certified Meteorologists on NOAA/ NWS Cuts

The Association for Certified Meteorologists (ACM) is an organization made up of Certified Consulting Meteorologists (CCMs) who have earned the designation from the American Meteorological Society (AMS). We provide diverse weather services including expert testimony for insurance and legal cases, forecasting and decision support, research and analysis, and more. This spans many vertical sectors such as: legal, insurance, transportation, energy, agriculture, commercial fisheries, tourism, construction, and more (the Weather Enterprise). Our members play a significant role in advancing the understanding and application of weather data and forecasting.

NOAA and the National Weather Service

Under the Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS) comprises various programs and offices that provide the backbone of weather data and services to help protect life and property, and foster a stronger, more resilient United States (U.S.) economy. This includes collecting, quality checking, and archiving weather observations, providing weather forecasts, and weather warnings. It operates many centers focused on different aspects of weather impacts in the United States, such as the National Hurricane Center (responsible for tracking and forecasting dangerous tropical storms that affect United States territory and international shipping in both major ocean basins) and the Storm Prediction Center (responsible for issuing public forecasts and warnings focused on severe thunderstorms, large hail, dangerous wind conditions, and tornadoes). NOAA also operates a fleet of weather satellites that provide continuous surveillance of weather systems over and near United States territory, and a network of advanced weather radar installations that automatically monitor potentially dangerous thunderstorms. These services are just as important as other core public services such as policing, fire departments, and public education.

The NWS is an indispensable component in the broader weather enterprise; a \$10B annual contribution to the U.S. economy. This enterprise includes, but is not limited to, agriculture, commerce/transportation, wildfire suppression agencies, marine agencies, river management agencies, the space program, emergency managers, communication companies, public utilities, insurance, legal and media companies. This infrastructure has taken decades to implement and provides the general public, businesses, and other governmental agencies access to short- and long-term forecasts as well as immediate severe storm, hurricane, and winter weather storm watches, advisories, and warnings.

Just recently, from March 12-16, a significant spring storm moved across the nation (California to the Carolines to New York) bringing more than 1,150 documented storm events, including 156 tornadoes, particularly across much of the nation's central and eastern states. This storm system also produced blizzard conditions, a massive dust storm with wind-driven grassland fires, and flooding. Initial reports indicate that 40 fatalities resulted from this storm system. Despite the damage and tragic fatalities, the NWS provided critical forecasts, warnings, and decision support to the public, emergency managers, and businesses to help reduce further damage and loss of life. This occurred in the face of many short-staffed NWS offices, some of which are operating with limited or no weather balloon launches (critical to improved awareness and weather forecasts). The information that was provided helped communities and citizens better prepare and respond. Without such services as we had in the early 20th century, storm systems could produce significantly more damage (relative) and fatalities.

Clearly, the work that the NWS and related NOAA research and operational agencies do is vital to the safety and security of life and property in the United States.

\$17-\$73 of Value per \$1 Invested

It cannot be overstated the value that NOAA and the NWS provides to the US economy. Multiple studies support a robust Return on Investment (ROI) in the range of \$17-\$73 per \$1 invested in NOAA and the NWS. NOAA and the NWS operate as one of the most impressive and valuable agencies within the U.S. federal government. Within the governmental realm, such a large ROI is uncommon.

Roadmap: What is Needed

In the face of significant staffing and budget changes, it remains unclear how NOAA/ NWS plans to proceed moving forward. Insufficient transparency and communication from NOAA/ NWS creates further uncertainty in the weather enterprise. Going forward, ACM members respectfully request that NOAA/ NWS must preserve core data and services to continue serving its mission and providing significant value to the U.S.

economy. The following are some of the most pressing questions which should be communicated in current and future plans:

- What offices and programs will see immediate and future changes?
- How will quality controlled, historical weather data remain accessible from the National Center for Environmental Information? This data is critical in helping to settle insurance and legal claims in the most fair and effective manner.
- What changes, if any, can be expected with future observation systems (*e.g.* radar, satellite)?
- What is the future of local Weather Forecast Offices in the NWS and how will they continue to best provide life-saving forecasts, warnings, and decision support to the public?
- How will weather forecast models and forecast model improvement be impacted?
- How will hurricane forecasts and numerical forecast models change as we go into the upcoming hurricane season?
- What changes might occur to current severe weather predictions and outlooks?
- What changes might occur to fire weather forecasts and decision support going into this wildfire season?

Conclusion

While NOAA's many agencies are imperative for the protection of life and property, it also has an exceptional impact on the economic welfare of our country. NOAA has provided decades of consistent, reliable data and information that is freely available, which is relied upon by every major industry and cannot be quickly, easily, or inexpensively replicated or replaced by any organization, public or private. NOAA must continue to provide these services that our safety and economy rely on: forecasts, warnings, public safety, and free and open data. There must be no compromise on public safety, the over 5 trillion dollars of the country's yearly GDP, and more than 10 million jobs that rely on NOAA/ NWS services.

References

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