



NOAA Central Region: Preparing for Nature's Fury

The central part of the United States is known for wide open spaces, fields of corn, the mighty Mississippi River -- and the big storms that bring destructive winds, large hail, and tornadoes. The NOAA Central Region has developed several programs to help residents of this area be better prepared for nature's fury. These efforts are contributing to NOAA's nationwide effort to improve responsiveness to weather events and build a Weather Ready Nation.

Integrated Warning Team Workshops

During high impact weather and water events, effective communication of severe weather information is vital to saving lives and property. While the NOAA National Weather Service provides the backbone of information regarding severe events, the agency is just one player in the entire Integrated Warning Team, which includes broadcast media and emergency management.

To foster better teamwork among the people involved in alerting residents of danger, the NOAA Central Region sponsors two Integrated Warning Team Workshops each year.



The first workshop was held in Kansas City in 2009. It included members of the NOAA Central Region team and social scientists from the area. As they met, the group quickly identified a critical communication problem. Each TV station in the Kansas City market used a different color palette for on-air display of NWS watch and warning information. The social scientists insisted consistency was vital to avoid confusion. As a result, the group developed a standardized color scheme used by all. This consistent message helps viewers more clearly understand the weather threat in their area. All of the IWT workshops held since have focused on improving critical communication.

The meeting in Kansas City set the bar for other communities. A total of eight IWT workshops sponsored by the NOAA Central Region have brought together key players in targeted locations throughout the region:
Kansas City (2009), Omaha, NE (2009)
Wichita, KS (2010), Cedar Rapids, IA (2010)
Grand Forks, ND (2011), Indianapolis (2011)
Lansing, MI (2012), Colorado Springs (2012)

"We've seen evidence in each of these communities that the integrated warning team workshops have helped improve warning communication to the public and key stakeholders," said Lynn Maximuk, Director of the NOAA National Weather Service Central Region and NOAA Central Region team lead. "Through the workshops, key IWT players are building and fostering closer relationships, which will strengthen communication and teamwork during high impact weather or water events."

Whatever Mother Nature brings to the central United States, communities will be better prepared as a result of these Integrated Warning Team workshops and the efforts of the NOAA Central Region.