

# Workshop Summary on Hazardous Weather Communication

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*Sponsored by the American Meteorological Society Long Island/NYC Chapter,  
NOAA/National Weather Service and Stony Brook University*

## **National Weather Service (NWS)**

- Deliver simple, unambiguous messages that must drive decisions and actions
- Ensure forecasts and warnings are up to date
- Communicate probability and uncertainty in forecasts
- Increase overlap between NWS forecasts and warnings and those of the private sector

## **Media**

- Continue to disseminate more information through the Internet and social media
- Develop more weather apps for iPads, iPhones, and Android
- Expand work with WSI and Google maps so audience can zoom into their neighborhood for a more tailored weather forecast
- Weather Extra Live on News 12 Long Island for people who want more technical weather information
- Continue to broadcast and distribute images of live hazardous weather situations quickly on social media – makes people take action sooner

## **Office of Emergency Managers**

- Utilizes only NWS forecasts
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) becomes active
- Conducts conference calls with town and city leaders
- Embeds a meteorologist sometimes in the EOC.

## **Science of Communication**

- Get to your point early
- Work with scientists to communicate their science better
- Make science more interesting to the public
- Distill the message – use clear, vivid, conversational language
- Know your audience
- Know your goal

## Current Issues & Problems for Hazardous Weather Communication

- Challenge on NWS side – forecast information is long and technical – trying to move from text products to graphics and images
- NWS has many great products but they are hidden – communication of this great data is lost
- Catchy words DO catch the public’s attention, but could be misleading (snowmageddon, polar vortex, etc.)
- Need to educate the decision makers
- People may listen to you, but do not actually understanding your message
- Upstate closes roadways prior to dangerous situation but on Long Island, roads are closed in the midst of the event
- How quickly can emergency managers make the transition from a minor situation to an upgraded hazardous situation? May need more lead time.
- Flash flood warnings are frequently issued, but most people don’t experience anything. The public and government officials become complacent when they hear flash flood warnings.
- NWS uses too many terms that confuse the public.
- Too much information for our varied geographical area where the forecast often varies across the NWS forecast area.

## Solutions

- Use overhead signs on major highways to provide hazardous weather warnings. (Implemented for day before Thanksgiving snowstorm in Westchester County)
- Integrate social scientists with the NWS
- Use the same color scheme for the same impacts on the NWS home page hazard map from day-to-day
- Utilize NWS video forecasts on social media and local forecast office web page
- People are beginning to think about how and what they are saying so they can communicate better
- Simplify the message when communicating with the public
- Reduce complacency in the public
- Communicate in clear, unambiguous ways that drive decisions and action

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