

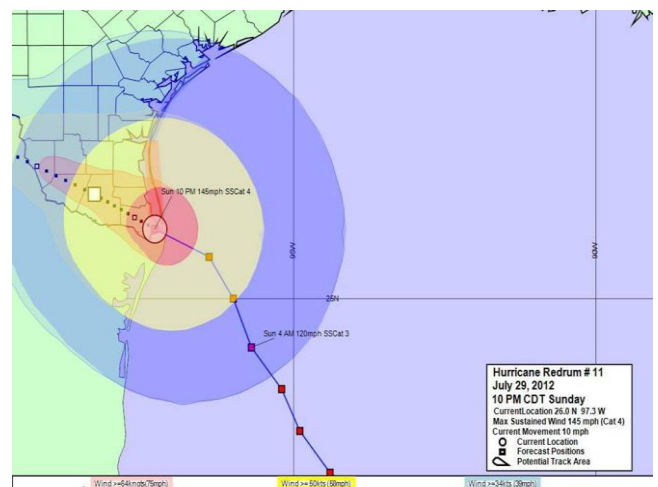


Forecaster Justin Gibbs briefing members of U.S. Customs and Border Protection and local Emergency Management personnel on fictitious Hurricane "Red Drum".

WFO Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley Provides Decision Support to Hurricane Exercise

EDINBURG, TX, July 27th – Staff from NWS Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley participated in an emergency management exercise at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) Headquarters, Rio Grande Valley Sector. The main purpose of the exercise was to gather local, state, and federal partners and test the capabilities of webEOC using the approach of a strengthening hurricane (right) as the test episode.

Warning Coordination Meteorologist Barry Goldsmith worked with leaders of the USCBP's Office of Incident Management (OIM) to develop the hurricane, as well as embedded hazardous materials incidents where local weather decision support would be layered into



Track of fictitious Hurricane "Red Drum" making landfall as a large Category 4 storm near the mouth of the Rio Grande.

the larger scale hurricane event. Each instance of weather decision support was considered a separate “inject” (event), used by the Incident Command System to update plans and make decisions for actions which focused on evacuation by land, air, and sea. Six inject briefings were prepared to cover each 12 hour forecast from 60 hours prior to landfall until landfall. The event compressed the 60 hour period into a three hour exercise window.



Forecaster **Justin Gibbs** discussing hurricane tracks and radar operations with Starr County Emergency Management Coordinator Eugenio "Gene" Falcon.

Forecaster **Justin Gibbs** and Warning Coordination Meteorologist **Barry Goldsmith** gave alternating briefings to decision makers on-site. Meanwhile, two separate hazardous materials injects were put in play during the exercise: One for a jackknifed propane tanker, with an electrical fire in the cab, on a highway used for contra-flow operations; a second for a train derailment which had a tanker car leaking chlorine. For these events, “mock” phone calls were made to the NWS office in Brownsville, where Senior Forecaster **Tim Speece** (below) and Forecaster **Blair Scholl** used Areal Locations of Hazardous Atmospheres (ALOHA) to model the extent and movement of each chemical plume (below).

John Wooden once said, “...you will play like you practice”. Thanks to the graciousness of the USCBP Rio Grande Valley Sector’s OIM, NWS

Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley was able to gain valuable knowledge from the practice exercise known as “Hurricane Red Drum”. Goldsmith added, “by including several staff members onsite and remotely from the WFO, we were able to practice a situation that could really happen – where multiple instances of weather decision support services are required at the same time.” Improving staff readiness for such decision support possibilities and involving them directly with the growing number of emergency management partners helps everyone associated in building a Weather Ready Rio Grande Valley.



Senior Forecaster **Tim Speece** evaluating plume dispersion from a fictitious propane leak and possible explosion in Harlingen, Texas, part of the Hurricane Red Drum exercise.