



Summary of the NWS Summer 2020 Partner Webinar Series: A Change in the Weather



In August 2020, in lieu of being able to hold an annual in-person National Weather Service (NWS) Summer Partners Meeting, the NWS Office of Organizational Excellence (OOE) organized a series of NWS Partner webinars under the theme: **A Change in the Weather**.

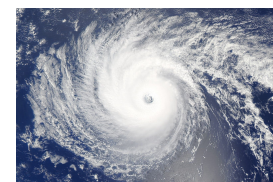
These webinars served to cover and discuss Enterprise topics pertaining to the adjustments, responses and shared best practices in light of the ongoing COVID pandemic. The sessions occurred weekly on Tuesdays from 2pm-3pm eastern time. These webinars were a follow-on from a NWS Partners Webinar held on [May 15, 2020](#), continuing the discussion of topics raised by attendees and the panelists.

The webinar topics, panelists, presentations and recordings are listed below:

1. **August 4th:** NWS Updates and the 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season

○ Panelists:

- Mary Erickson, Deputy Director, National Weather Service
- Shawn Smith, Meteorologist / Emergency Response Specialist National Weather Service Operations Center
- Michael Manning, President and CEO, Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank



○ Materials:

- [Presentation](#)
- [Recording](#)

2. **August 11th:** Managing Operational Risk and the Supply Chain

○ Panelists:

- John Murphy, Chief Operating Officer, NWS
- Anthony Bush, Director, Civil Space and Weather, Raytheon
- Alicia Wasula, President, Shade Tree Meteorology, LLC



○ Materials:

- [Presentation](#)
- [Recording](#)

3. **August 18th:** Research and Undergraduate Learning

○ Panelists:



- Dr. Louis Uccellini, Director, National Weather Service
- Dr. Vernon Morris, Professor of Chemistry and Environmental Science and Director of the School of Mathematical and Natural Science, Arizona State University
- Dr. Sepi Yalda, Professor of Meteorology and the Director of the Millersville University's Center for Disaster Research and Education
- Materials:
 - [Presentation](#)
 - [Recording](#)

4. **August 25th from 2pm-3pm: Themes and Trends for the Workforce**



- Panelists:
 - Bryan Hancock, Partner, McKinsey & Company
 - Sarah Tucker-Ray, Partner, McKinsey & Company
 - Benjamin Friedman, Deputy Under Secretary for Operations, NOAA
 - Aaron H. Levy, Director (A), Individual and Community Preparedness Division, FEMA
 - Moderator: Mary Erickson, Deputy Director, National Weather Service
- Materials:
 - [Presentation](#)
 - [Recording](#)

Themes and takeaways from the four part series include:

Preparedness and Serving the Public:

- The NWS continues to meet the mission throughout the pandemic, even as they have adapted to how and where their employees may be conducting their duties, but it has led to increased collaboration and coordination across the NWS and with partners. The NWS cannot meet the mission alone.
- Non-profit and community organizations are at the front lines of supporting our citizens and some are struggling during these times. Some organizations providing services to the community have had to close or reduce operations due to safety protocols, while others are stretched by the need to extend what are typically shorter-term disaster response measures for a 6-month+ crisis.

Managing Operations and New Customer Needs

- Both large and small businesses are adjusting to changing client needs and supply chain impacts to operate. For example, more client meetings have to be virtual and some specialized equipment delays have occurred. Online communication methods that used to be tools of convenience are now tools of necessity.
- For small business in particular, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of fiscally conservative budgeting and planning for unpredictable workloads.
- Companies have experienced a flip in numbers from those that used to explicitly telework as being a minority to now being the majority. As a result they have developed new workflows, communication processes and other policies to both support their employees and meet their business missions.
- We may never go back to the way we did business before and need to consider new opportunities for recruitment and workplace flexibilities for retention of talent.

Teaching and Supporting the Next Generation

- The change to virtual learning and the lack of experiential opportunities for students has been devastating to many colleges and universities. Those that already had the experience and infrastructure of offering programs online, were at an advantage to continue serving students without great disruption.
- High-contact experiences and collaborative groups have been effective in developing community, increasing access, and reducing barriers and isolation for underrepresented students in STEM fields. Some universities are experimenting with moving these experiences online, while others have maintained in-person opportunities with additional safety precautions.
- Increasing access for interested students to our enterprise is key to diversifying the future workforce. An inclusive private sector could expand access points that traditionally federal agencies have provided.
- The academic community is very interested in working with private industry more to increase experiential learning opportunities for students. The shift to virtual work during COVID provides an opportunity for private industry groups to establish remote mentorship or internship opportunities to students.

Empowering the Workforce Across the Enterprise

- COVID-fatigue is a real thing which requires diligence on reinforcing safety protocols for employees.
- All sectors of our Enterprise are interested in learning ways to better onboard employees, train employees and effectively integrate new employees into teams and their organizations.
- Scalability, flexibility and transparency and establishing a routine are key recommendations for supporting the entire workforce across sectors and meeting the mission or client needs of organizations. Rather than using a “one size fits all” model when making decisions about in-person versus remote work, organizations can segment

employees based on how they interact with colleagues, specific job requirements, and employee preference where possible.

- Many organizations paused activities--like training, culture work, performance evaluations, and professional development--based on the assumption operational changes under COVID would be short term. As the current state of affairs continues for the foreseeable future, organizations should revisit those activities, and invest in their transition to virtual execution as needed.
- NOAA was prepared early and has adapted by supporting employees and showcasing the ingenuity and creativity of its employees to both meet the mission and serve partners and our citizens.
- Organizations should diligently capture lessons learned now to inform future planning and adjustments through continued uncertainties. Organizations should be intentional about identifying the issues, workflows, and pain points that consistently come up, so they can be intentional about solving for them.

Resources and References:

- NOAA Education:
 - [NOAA Live! 4 Kids](#)
 - [Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions](#)
- [McKinsey & Company Consumer-Employer Survey Insights](#)
- [FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness](#): Ready.gov/open-training
- [Millersville Center for Disaster Research and Education](#)
- [National VOAD](#) and [Feeding America](#)

Partner feedback throughout the webinars included the following:

- “Thank you for your continued service to the USA in this trying time! I have worked with the NWS as a private enterprise partner and I value the relationship we have built over 30 years! They are always helpful, guiding and willing to take questions.”
- “Excellent series. I hope this online format will also continue, at least as an option, in future partner's meetings. Kudos to the NWS for long term successful COOP.”
- “Thank you for having these webinars - they don't/can't replace the in person interaction at Partners Meetings, but are a good pandemic substitute.”