



## NOAA's National Weather Service taking action to build a 'Weather-ready' nation

### 2011 ties record for billion-dollar disasters

August 17, 2011

NOAA is launching a comprehensive initiative to build a "Weather-ready" nation to make America safer by saving more lives and protecting livelihoods as communities across the country become increasingly vulnerable to severe weather events, such as tornado outbreaks, intense heat waves, flooding, active hurricane seasons, and solar storms that threaten electrical and communication systems.

NOAA is also announcing that the United States has so far this year experienced [nine separate disasters](#), each with an economic loss of \$1 billion or more — tying the record set in 2008. The latest event to surpass the \$1 billion price tag is this summer's flooding along the Missouri and Souris rivers in the upper Midwest. This year's losses have so far amounted to more than \$35 billion.

"Severe weather represents a very real threat to public safety that requires additional robust action," said Jack Hayes, director of NOAA's National Weather Service. "The increasing impacts of natural disasters, as seen this year, are a stark reminder of the lives and livelihoods at risk."

In partnership with other government agencies, researchers, and the private sector, the National Weather Service is charting a path to a weather-ready nation through:

- Improved precision of weather and water forecasts and effective communication of risk to local authorities;
- Improved weather decision support services with new initiatives such as the development of mobile-ready emergency response specialist teams;
- Innovative science and technological solutions such as the nationwide implementation of Dual Pol radar technology, Integrated Water Resources Science and Services, and the Joint Polar Satellite System;
- Strengthening joint partnerships to enhance community preparedness;
- Working with weather enterprise partners and the emergency management community to enhance safety and economic output and effectively manage environmental resources.

The National Weather Service is also planning innovative, community-based test projects across the country, ranging in focus from emergency response to ecological forecasting, to enhance the agency's preparedness efforts to better address the impacts of extreme weather. Test projects will initially be launched at strategic locations in the Gulf Coast, South and mid-Atlantic.

"These test projects serve as tangible examples of how the National Weather Service is trying to address the impact of weather-related disasters," said Hayes. "Ultimately, these projects will provide the specific action plans necessary for us to adapt to extreme weather events and represent an important step in building a weather-ready nation."

In the past 30 years, the United States has experienced a total of 108 weather-related disasters that have caused more than \$1 billion dollars in damages. Overall, these disasters have resulted in three-quarters of \$1 trillion in standardized losses since 1980, according to NOAA records.

According to Munich Reinsurance America, one of the top providers of property and casualty reinsurance in the U.S., the number of natural disasters has tripled in the last 20 years and 2010 was a record breaker with about 250. Average thunderstorm losses have increased five-fold since 1980. For the first half of 2011 there have been \$20 billion in thunderstorm losses, up from the previous three-year average of \$10 billion.

This increase in weather-related disasters coupled with population growth and density in high-risk areas, has moved NOAA and its partners — from the emergency management community and across America's weather enterprise — from concern to action.

"Building a Weather-ready nation is everyone's responsibility," said Eddie Hicks, IAEM USA president. "It starts with National Weather Service and emergency managers, like the U.S. Council of International Association of Emergency Managers, but it ends with actions by individuals and businesses to reduce their risks. The more prepared communities are for destructive weather, the less of a human and economic toll we'll experience in the future, and that's a great thing for the country."

"The partnership between the government, private, and academic sectors, all represented in the professional membership of the American Meteorological Society, is extremely strong and is essential in achieving this vision," said Jonathan Malay, president of the AMS. "Given the resources to grow our scientific understanding of our complex environment through observations and research and to apply this knowledge in serving society, we can do amazing things together."

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Visit us online at [weather.gov](#) and on [Facebook](#).

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).