

# Eastern NC Region of the American Red Cross

## Weather Watch Team Procedures and Team Policies Revised August 24, 2016

### Mission of the Weather Watch

Volunteers providing daily monitoring of weather conditions in order to distribute reports of threatening weather and related damage in support of the situational awareness needs of the Eastern North Carolina Region of the American Red Cross.

### Why

We distribute the information to staff and key volunteers including DAT leaders and the leads of various services—actually anyone who requests the notifications. Often, our reports are the first reports of a given weather event that those receiving our messages may see. Some may be traveling when they see our weather messages and otherwise might not learn about threatening conditions “back home” until much later.

The key reasons, however, for providing a weather watch service include situational awareness: early warning, documentation of events, providing information for decision making, and sharing the work among a larger group of volunteers of monitoring—a task that would otherwise take staff away from other key responsibilities particularly during a disaster response.

### The Task

1. Responsibility for monitoring and reporting the weather during a shift lasting 1 week out of every 5 weeks, or making certain that someone qualified is covering for you.
2. Shifts are Monday through Sunday. **Weather Watch Team leadership will draft up weekly schedules for periods out to 6 months, and then coordinate with the weather watch team members for availability. Be sure to note if you have any conflicts with your assigned week, or at any point during your week. If you do, as soon as practical, send an email out to the weather watch team, asking to trade shifts/weeks, as needed.**

For more short notice conflicts that may arise during your assigned week, you can send email out to the team, asking for back up. In such cases, be sure to send a reminder email to the person backing you up, on the day that they will covering for you.

3. Use appropriate distribution lists.
4. Follow procedures regarding what to report and how to report specific weather events and related damage.

#### You Need

1. A computer that can remain connected to the Internet for several hours.
2. An email account
3. A spreadsheet program such as Excel
4. Smart phone recommended

#### You Are Provided

1. Training, coaching, job shadowing to learn the task
2. The backup of your team
3. Links to all the information sources
4. On-going training, if only informally through discussion with team members.

#### What to send

In general, by email

1. Initial Warnings issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) no matter the type of weather.
  - A. NWS may issue Warnings classified as “continued” or otherwise repeat the information from an earlier report. We only need to report the first warning.
2. Risk of a Regional Weather Threat (if not already sent out!)
3. It is your option at the beginning of your shift to send out a forecast for the week by cutting and pasting from a source such as the NWS or Weather Underground. Note that there are four NWS reporting stations covering our region which may require sending out three or four different forecasts.
  - B. There is no need otherwise to distribute forecasts or general weather statements.
4. If a situation occurs or a question arises that is not covered by this manual, call another member of the weather watch for clarification. When in doubt, send it out.

In general, by Phone

1. In the event of damage to multiple structures, no matter the cause, phone the Disaster Program Manager or Specialist responsible for the county where the event occurs. Make certain they are aware, and offer help such as mapping of the approximate location of the event. Ask if DA services are needed. Make certain they know we are continuing to monitor for threatening weather conditions.

2. Anything urgent you feel needs to be shared with the Chapter.
3. After you make a call, immediately inform the DA Lead and or the Weather Watch Lead regarding the situation.

Who to Call

Mary Donny, Regional Disaster Officer, C: 919-714-3995

Chapter	Counties	Contact
The American Red Cross of Central North Carolina	Durham, Orange, Person, Granville, Vance, and Warren	<b>Kim Francis, DPM</b> C: 919-883-6132 <b>Gerhrig Habershtock, DPS</b> C: 919-239-0344
The ARC of the Triangle Area of North Carolina	Wake, Franklin, Johnston, Chatham, and Lee	<b>Sabrina Amon, DPM</b> C: 984-204-3218 <b>Gerhrig Habershtock, DPS</b> C: 919-239-0344
The American Red Cross of the Sandhills of North Carolina	Bladen, Sampson, Harnett, Cumberland, Robeson, Scotland, Hoke, Moore and Richmond	<b>Cynthia Bradley, Interim DPM</b> C: 910-318-6208 <b>Ron Thompson, DPS,</b> Cumberland C: 910.728.0734 <b>Patt Smart, DPS, Robeson</b> C: 910-536-7448

David Garrison, Senior Disaster Program Manager, C: 910-515-8174

Chapter	Counties	Contact
	Martin, Beaufort, Pitt, Hyde, Washington, and Tyrrell	<b>Rich Burke, DPM</b> C: 252-214-2079
The American Red Cross of Northeastern North Carolina	Northampton, Halifax, Nash, Wilson, and Edgecombe Bertie, Dare, Hertford, Gates, Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Currituck, and Camden	<b>Carolyn Stern, DPS</b> C: 919-714-3998 <b>Megan McDonald, DPS</b> C: 252-557-6500
The ARC of the Cape Fear Area of North Carolina	Onslow, Craven, Pamlico, and Carteret Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, New Hanover, and Pender Jones, Lenoir, Wayne and Greene	<b>Sarah Egan, DPM</b> C: 252-375-0454 <b>Mike Oppenheim, DPS</b> C: 910-762-2683 <b>Kathy Jones, DPS</b> C: 252-686-1940

## Specific Weather Events

### Flooding

1. Significant rainfall is one trigger to begin monitoring for flooding.  
The sites to consult include:
  - A. Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service, NWS River Forecasts, and USGS Current Water Data for North Carolina.<sup>1</sup>
2. Report NWS reports of Rivers/Streams for water levels at HIGH, Near Flood Stage or flooding, provided that:
  - A. The trend indicates that water levels will reach at or above flood stage (i.e., minor”, “moderate”, or “major” levels of flooding). Do not report “action” level flooding.
  - B. There is a threat to residential housing. This information may or may not be indicated in the NWS or USGS warning itself, therefore, flood warning review is a two step process. First, determine the highest stage/flood level (in feet) forecast, and then review the historical damage/impact expected for that stage. If no impacts to residential housing are projected from that flood stage, do not report.
3. Residential threats whether flooding is occurring or not.
4. NWS Flood threats from a specific river or stream may be reported several times a day or over several days. Only the initial report need be distributed, unless there is a significant departure from the earlier reported trend.
5. Damage and Location to any type of residential structure if source is attributable to local news media, the NWS, or reported through social media by a recognized professional source such as a meteorologist or news media representative.

### Hazardous Weather Forecasts

1. Send if the report indicates that near term conditions could result in severe weather including tornados and thunderstorms.
2. Do not send if the statement indicates that no Hazardous weather is expected in the next 48 hours.
3. See Examples section.

### Ice Storms

1. Send out initial warnings only.
2. Monitor and report any significant changes such as cancelation of warnings or changes in onset time.
3. Apply procedures for Power Outages and Structure Damage reporting.

### Power Outages

1. Typically, members of the weather watch would not monitor power outages unless a significant storm results in widespread outages. The outage reports may impact decisions regarding opening or closing shelters.
2. Use template provided to document and report outages. Include reported time

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<sup>1</sup> For links, visit [ENCRCweather.info](http://ENCRCweather.info)

3. Generally, the trigger for reporting is when outages rise above 500 homes in a county particularly when the power company is not reporting a resolution time, or reports that the outages will extend to midnight or beyond.

#### Structural Damage

1. High winds from a severe thunderstorm, ice storms, and tornadoes can all result in structural damage
2. Include, if available. mapped area showing affected structure(s).
3. NWS maps are not accurate locators of affected structures, requiring some minor manipulation of their maps to better approximate the location of the damage.

#### Storm Damage Reports (Consolidated)

1. The Eastern NC Region disaster response and assessment leadership usually likes to see a consolidated storm damage report within 24 hours of significant weather event/events. You can retrieve consolidated storm damage reports from the webpages of 4 local National Weather Service Offices covering eastern NC – looks under Text Products and then Local Storm Reports (LSRs). You may have to scroll back through the LSRs to get to the storm report summary. You can also get a consolidated list of storm reports from the SPC page, but you will have to filter out reports from locations other than eastern NC. In both cases, you may need to filter out reports that reference wind speed measurements or hail reports, as Red Cross does not need this information.

#### Thunderstorms

1. NWS reports of severe thunderstorms.
2. Do not distribute reports of *Strong* thunderstorms from the NWS.

#### Trees/Power Lines Down

1. DAT calls can be triggered by isolated storms that bring localized damage, such as trees on a house or if power lines are down. DAT teams may use the information to avoid using roads that have become inaccessible due to downed trees or power lines.
2. Do not report unless the information includes residential damage or roadways blocked due to down trees or power lines.

#### Tropical Storms

1. During the Tropical Storm Season (Jun 1<sup>st</sup> through Nov 30<sup>th</sup>), monitor the 5 Day Graphical Tropical Weather Outlook on the NHC webpage for discussion on possible tropical storm formation. Consult with weather team leadership if unsure about sending out notification.
2. Once NHC has identified a storm with number (tropical depression) or a name (tropical storm); send out the initial advisory (i.e., 5-Day Forecast Cone for Storm Center) regarding the impending storm only.
3. After the initial report is sent, you may be asked to send out additional reports. Otherwise, your weather watch duty involves monitoring for other threatening weather conditions, power outages and structural damage.

4. Tropical storms trigger a series of staff meeting that will include weather watch and DA leadership. As a result of the risk assessment, our regional disaster officer will likely request continued monitoring of the storm including specialized reports covering storm surge or storm tracking from others on the team already familiar with the reporting tools. You will likely receive a contact from the weather watch leads who may request that you assume some related monitoring and reporting tasks.

#### Tornados

1. Distribute all tornado warning alerts.
2. Distribute warnings if the NWS indicates that conditions are favorable for tornado formation. Only one message with each storm system needs to be sent even if the NWS distributes the same message in a series of alerts.
3. Often, the NWS will offer an immediate report of a sighting or a touchdown. Occasionally, the NWS report of a sighting or a touchdown may be hours after the event. If you receive the NWS report (or credible social media report) within an hour of the event:
  - A. Phone the Disaster Program Manager or Specialist responsible for the county where the event occurs. Make certain they are aware, and offer help such as mapping of the approximate location of the event.
  - B. Phone either the Weather Watch Lead or DA lead to make certain they are aware.

#### How to Send

1. Using email: Send information/warnings only to the email distribution list of the affected Red Cross territory or 'quadrant' (see "Distribution Lists" below). For example, if a severe thunderstorm will only affect counties in the North East territory, then send information only to the Northeast email distribution list. If information applies to the entire eastern NC Red Cross region, then send to all distribution lists.
2.
  - A. Include the subject Line stating what type of Warning/Etc., Ex.: "Severe Thunderstorm Warning;" "Confirmed Damage in XYZ County;" and "Flood Threat Information"
3. Body of Email—
  - A. Copy and paste from NWS reports:
    - i. Warnings: Include source, date, time, and pertinent information ONLY! No need to include "precautions to take," or information relating to areas outside of our region.
    - ii. Damage: Include what type, address/area and cause.
    - iii. Mapped Areas: State reason for attaching the mapped area, i.e., "NWS report of damage from high winds."
    - iv. Flood Threats: Give river/stream name and location(s) threatened

#### What to Do in Active Weather Situations

1. You are part of a team. Active, changing weather conditions, particularly severe weather or when there are extensive power outages, typically require more than one person among whom the work may be divided. If you see active weather happening and it's not your shift, offer help. If it is your shift, ask for help. It will be an especially busy period, for example during a major severe weather outbreak, you should proactively reach out to the team, and then assign areas of responsibility to avoid duplication of work. This can most easily be accomplished by assigning one person to track and report severe weather warnings, one person to track and report storm damage reports, and one person to track and report power outages
2. By being on the Weather Watch, you have agreed to be weather aware during your shift. For most of the year, weather shifts will be quiet and require very little active monitoring. If the weather is not expected to turn severe, you may end your shift for the day when you judge appropriate.
3. Most storms do not result in damage and you will not need to send out a report unless conditions turn severe. During severe weather, you and the team will need to actively monitor for damage and power outages so that the Red Cross can make effective response decisions. Your shift for the day ends when weather conditions stabilize, as you deem appropriate, even if rains and winds persist.
4. If you are caught in a storm, your safety is the priority.

#### Distribution Lists

1. We use Google Group to maintain lists of who needs to receive messages, links for which you are provided separately.
  - A. If you become aware of any needed changes to the distribution lists, report the requested changes to the DA Lead or Weather Watch Lead.
2. There are four different lists used corresponding to the four quadrants of our region:
  - A. CNCC and Triangle Chapters, Northeast Chapter, Cape Fear Chapter, and the Sandhills Chapter. The "Regional Map" link on the Eastern NC Red Cross webpage shows which counties are in the four distribution groups.
  - B. There is no combined distribution list and, unfortunately, this means that when a message covers a larger area than a chapter, some recipients including you will receive multiple copies of the same message.

#### Examples

1. Copied from National Weather Service reports:
  - A. TORNADO WARNING  
TORNADO WARNING  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC  
830 PM EDT SAT MAR 29 2014  
THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN RALEIGH HAS ISSUED A  
\* TORNADO WARNING FOR... WEST CENTRAL JOHNSTON COUNTY IN CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA... SOUTH CENTRAL WAKE COUNTY IN CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA... NORTHEASTERN HARNETT COUNTY IN CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA... \* UNTIL 915 PM EDT  
  
\* AT 829 PM EDT...DOPPLER RADAR INDICATED A SEVERE THUNDERSTORM CAPABLE OF PRODUCING A TORNADO. THIS DANGEROUS STORM WAS LOCATED 5 MILES NORTH OF LILLINGTON...AND MOVING NORTHEAST AT 25 MPH.

\* LOCATIONS IMPACTED INCLUDE... LILLINGTON...GARNER...FUQUAY-VARINA...ANGIER...BUIES CREEK AND COATS CROSSROADS.

## B. HAZARDOUS WEATHER OUTLOOK

A STRONG LOW PRESSURE SYSTEM WILL TRACK NORTHEAST ACROSS THE REGION THIS AFTERNOON AND EVENING. A FEW SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS MAY AFFECT CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA ALONG AND AHEAD OF THIS STORM SYSTEM. THE MAIN SEVERE WEATHER THREAT WILL BE DAMAGING WINDS... ALTHOUGH AN ISOLATED TORNADO IS ALSO POSSIBLE. IN ADDITION...HEAVY DOWNPOURS MAY RESULT IN MINOR FLOODING...MAINLY IN URBAN AND LOW LYING AREAS. THE SEVERE THREAT WILL BE GREATEST BETWEEN NOON AND 9 PM.

## C. FLOOD WARNING - Example

FLOOD STATEMENT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WILMINGTON NC

930 AM EDT WED MAR 12 2014

...THE FLOOD WARNING CONTINUES FOR THE FOLLOWING RIVERS...

CAPE FEAR AT WILLIAM O HUSKE LOCK AND DAM 3 AFFECTING BLADEN COUNTY NC

CAPE FEAR AT ELIZABETHTOWN AFFECTING BLADEN COUNTY NC

THE CAPE FEAR IS EXPECTED TO CREST AT 18 FEET ON Jun 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016. AT 17 FEET, HOMES N AND S OF WILLIAMSTON ARE FLOODED. SECONDARY ROADS ADJACENT TO THE RIVER ARE IMPASSABLE. EVACUATION OF SOME RESIDENTS IN FLOOD PRONE AREAS NEEDED.

Weather Watch Work Flow Chart

