

October 12, 2021

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chair, Science, Space & Technology Committee
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Ranking Member, Science, Space & Technology Committee
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson and Ranking Member Lucas:

As president of the International Association of Emergency Managers – USA Council (IAEM-USA) I write to provide testimony for the record regarding the future of the National Weather Service. Our 5,000 members serve the people of the United States in every state, most counties, and many cities large and small. Our professionals serve in every sector of our society – government, private industry, academia, healthcare, campuses, NGO's, etc.

In every one of these sectors, one of our most important relationships is with the National Weather Service (NWS). This relationship grew to its present state primarily over the past eight-plus years as a direct result of the responsiveness and inclusiveness of Director Louis Uccellini. IAEM salutes Dr. Uccellini, and wishes him the best as he prepares to retire from public service.

I also have the honor of serving as the emergency management director for a large urban county in the upper Midwest, and hold a posting to the National Academies of Sciences, Medicine, and Engineering Resilient America Roundtable, and am an adjunct professor at the Idaho State University Homeland Security and Emergency Management program.

At the time of Dr. Uccellini's ascension to leadership of the NWS, our dependence on the men and women of our local NWS officers was not always coupled with true partnerships. IAEM and others worked with Dr. Uccellini to clearly identify the need for close partnership between local emergency managers and our local NWS offices, and to forge a new relationship. The state of our partnership is strong and should be used as an example of best practices throughout the federal government.

Working together, we have realized the true benefits of Impact-Based Decision Support Services (IDSS). These services are utilized year-round to support every aspect of our activity. We rely on the relationships between the local emergency manager and the staff at the local Weather Service Office (WSO). IDSS is critical to our planning and response to all hazards, including acts of terror and public health emergency.



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The relationships between local emergency managers and the local WSO's, coupled with IDSS, has obvious benefits. We work together to pre-plan every major event. Obviously, when a serious incident occurs, we work together with our WSO in real time. Less obvious of benefit is the relationship between locals and the WSO – simply knowing each other means that trust has been built and the understanding of strengths and weaknesses of individuals are known in advance by all parties.

Recently, when we brought FEMA into our county to step up a federal vaccination site, the relationships between my office and our WSO was critical to ensure the success of the clinic and the safety of both the providers and the residents. Routine day-to-day interaction-based relationships pay dividends when disasters or other hazards strike. IAEM spoke up eight years ago when rumors of consolidation of severe storm warning points threatened to remove the relationships so carefully built.

Capacity of the National Weather Service to provide support and cooperation is critical to the nation's public safety. When funding from Congress has not been sufficient to meet these missions, local emergency managers have partnered with our WSOs to ensure that the capabilities to support IDSS and related services are not degraded. **IAEM strongly supports full funding for the National Weather Service.**

We respectfully remind the Committee that there is a significant difference between seeking efficiency and supporting effectiveness. In all cases, we believe there is a critical need to ensure that the NWS in general, and the WSO services in particular, remain effective at all times, and full staffing is necessary to accomplish this.

We stress that a practice that has worked for one line of service (e.g., the National Hurricane Center) may not work for other predictive or response systems. The overall success of the National Storm Prediction Center does not mimic or replace the onsite relationships and local knowledge of WSO forecasters working with local emergency managers.

Neither can broadcast meteorologists or expensive weather prediction companies replace the services of the local forecaster. The high cost of such services and the lack of local relationship and understanding make such services no substitute for the local WSO.

Both personally and as president of IAEM, I appreciate the programs instituted under Dr. Uccellini. His knowledge, leadership, and professionalism will be difficult to replace. IAEM remains committed to working with you and NOAA to identify and onboard the next Director. We remain committed to partnering with the men and women of the National Weather Service to meet our joint responsibilities to provide for the public safety the American people.

IAEM thanks you for the opportunity to weigh in on the future of the National Weather Service, and we stand ready to address any follow-up questions and to provide more details about any specific issue the Committee requires.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judson M. Freed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Judson Freed, CEM

President

U.S. Council

International Association of Emergency Managers