



Anticipating The Big One: Takeaways from Hurricane Ida

March 25th from 1:00pm-2:00pm ET

Presented by: **Whitney Flynn, CEM**, Hydrologist and FEMA Liaison Officer to the National Water Center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama; **Alex Lamers**, Warning Coordination Meteorologist of the National Weather Service Weather Prediction Center

Presentation Abstract: In recent years, the United States has been affected by numerous extreme rainfall and flooding events, and these have been enormously costly both in terms of economic damage and lives lost. From 2015-2019, the country experienced 15 flooding-related disasters, each costing at least \$1 billion in damage. The period from 2016-2017 was the deadliest two-year period for flooding in the U.S. since the early 1980s, with over 250 fatalities. And this has not stopped, with the most recent example being the devastating flooding in the Northeast U.S. from Ida in 2021. The large number of significant flooding events in the past decade, observed long-term increases in the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events, and changes in development patterns that affect vulnerability to those hazards all make the threat of flooding catastrophes a relevant and urgent topic for the emergency management community.

One pressing question is how to best differentiate between the cases which are more likely to cause nuisance flooding, and those which may escalate into a major incident necessitating a larger-scale response. This presentation will address how the National Weather Service has taken strides in forecasting catastrophic flooding events days in advance, viewed through the lens of Hurricane Ida, and its collaboration with the emergency management community to enhance decision making and response operations, as well as mitigation and recovery efforts.

We know that it is not a matter of if catastrophic flooding events will happen in the future, but when. The goal for the National Weather Service is to collaborate with the weather industry as well as our deep core partners in emergency management to build communities that enable a Weather and Water Ready Nation.

Speaker Bios: Whitney Flynn is a Hydrologist and the FEMA Liaison Officer to the National Water Center (NWC) in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The NWC is the first national water resources facility in the country that serves as a catalyst for delivering a new generation of water information and services to the nation. Whitney serves to establish a collaboration between FEMA, the NWC, and other emergency management and hydro communities for the purposes of disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, recovery, and resiliency. Before coming onboard with FEMA in 2021, Whitney served as a Physical Scientist for the NWC's Water Prediction Operations Division. She has played a key role in the Department of Commerce (DOC) Agency Priority Goal (APG) to mitigate flood impacts by demonstrating improved decision support services to emergency managers. Whitney graduated summa cum laude from Jacksonville State University (JSU) with her B.S. in Geography and GIS in 2015, and her M.S. in Emergency Management from JSU in 2017. In 2019, Whitney earned her CEM designation, making her the first woman in the NWS to receive this certification.

Alex Lamers is the Warning Coordination Meteorologist of the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Prediction Center (WPC) in College Park, Maryland. WPC is a national forecasting center with expertise in forecasting precipitation and hazardous weather up to 7 days in advance, including extreme rainfall events, and Alex is responsible for collaborating with government and public safety partners, media outlets, and other interested users about those forecasts and their interpretation. He has a B.S. in

Meteorology from the University of Oklahoma and has worked at four local NWS offices in the past 14 years. This included operational weather forecasting, support for decision-makers and educational outreach in Norman, Oklahoma; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Duluth, Minnesota; and Tallahassee, Florida. Alex has also worked at National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) headquarters in the Program Coordination Office, directly supporting the Administrator on matters of satellites and environmental information, including during the launch of the GOES-R satellite in 2016.