

## **LETTER FROM KEN GRAHAM, NOAA'S NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**

Every year, I am energized by attending the IAEM Annual Conference — an unmatched forum to engage directly with IAEM members. This experience solidifies the foundation and bond between the National Weather Service and our core partners across the entire emergency management community.

I am struck by the similar and complementary missions of the NWS and IAEM. For IAEM, members are “professionals whose goals are saving lives and protecting property and the environment during emergencies and disasters.” Meanwhile, the NWS “provides weather, water and climate data, forecasts, warnings, and impact-based decision support services for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy.” We are intricately connected, intertwined even, in the sense that we deeply depend on each other to achieve our respective and shared goals.

But we are facing a reality where our missions are becoming increasingly challenging to meet.

How so? Today's weather isn't the weather we once had, and the impacts that weather can bring today are more impactful, more dire. With an ever-increasing population, there are people, property, and businesses in weather's way — from our hurricane-prone coastline to tornadoes and a wildfire season that is now year-round, just to name some. With a changing climate, marked in part by a warming world and rising sea levels, our weather seems less normal as we set new records for the warmest, wettest, and driest on varying timescales.

What does this mean for us? The stakes are high. The public, first responders, elected officials, and many other groups depend on us more than ever to predict, preposition, and provide for the safety and well-being of the communities we serve.

I attend the IAEM Annual Conference to listen to the firsthand experiences of emergency managers from across the country who have worked myriad situations because it helps me and the entire NWS better understand your perspectives and needs — before, during and after a disaster — which then tells us how we can better serve and how we can work better together. Afterall, there is a lot on the line.

In an effort to build a Weather Ready Nation, the NWS developed and refined our Impact-Based Decision Support Services (IDSS). Many of you have welcomed our forecasters into your EOCs, and in other venues to be alongside you, for us to meet our goal of saving lives and protecting property. But as the needs of our communities evolve, your needs change, and therefore the National Weather Service must transform.

Earlier this year, I released the NWS Strategic Plan 2023-2033 with the overall goal to transform the NWS into a more nimble, flexible, and mobile agency providing indispensable mission services eye-to-eye with decision makers. There are notable similarities with the Principles of Emergency Management. Our Strategic Plan is a readable, relatable, and actionable document that guides the NWS through priorities and action strategies for the future (also known as Ken's 10).

These are not lofty wishes, but transformative activities that allow us to focus and direct resources to turn them into accomplishments. One such accomplishment you are likely familiar with is NWChat 2.0 that launched in the summer. With a spotlight on the project, we got it

done and now more than 21,000 users are collaborating like never before — all in the name of information sharing for the greater public good. Many other transformative initiatives remain, and we will be working on the roadmap and implementation timeframes for those activities. This will build and sustain a healthy NWS workforce that is equipped with the best technology and is mobile to work alongside our partners, especially in the emergency management community.

As the saying goes, the only constant is change. And change isn't always easy or fast, but it is necessary. The NWS and emergency management community are in this together — before, during, and after the IAEM Annual Meeting, and in more close-knit and high-pressure environments such as an EOC. On behalf of the entire NWS, I thank you for your steadfast support, and I commit to you that we will always do our best to provide you with the information you need, when you need it, and how you need it in order to inform your critical decisions.

I look forward to being with you in Long Beach in November.

-Ken Graham  
Director, NOAA's National Weather Service

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NOTE: Principles of Emergency Management:  
<https://www.iaem.org/portals/25/documents/Principles-of-Emergency-Management-Flyer.pdf>