

Kathleen Ford

From: Kathleen Ford
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 6:59 PM
To: craig.mclean@noaa.gov
Cc: mary.erickson@noaa.gov; Paul.Dellegatto@foxtv.com
Subject: Fwd: Birmingham, Alabama's National Weather Service Tweet contradicting NOAA'S graphics

Dear Mr. McLean,

I forward to you the message I sent to Ms. Erickson on September 1, 2019.

I, too, believe science matters and scientific facts should not be politicized. I also know that scientist can and do disagree. Nonetheless, there has to be consistency in the messaging from those responsible for the messaging, especially in storm preparation particularly where evacuation is a potential choice of action.

We witnessed the disastrous consequences of Mayor Nagin's non-responsiveness to the magnificent storm Hurricane Katrina. Significantly, New Jersey and New York residents never received a hurricane warning for Hurricane Sandy BECAUSE NOAA NEVER ISSUED ONE ahead of the storm making landfall.

<https://www.climatecentral.org/news/for-second-time-noaa-forms-review-team-on-hurricane-sandy-15344>. Does former NOAA COO David Twitley, who felt compelled to weigh in on NOAA's recent press release, really want the public to more closely scrutinize that NOAA decision?

I wrote Ms. Erickson because it seemed to me that the Birmingham NWS forecaster's tweet followed too closely on President Trump's tweet thus appearing political. Perhaps, there are phone records showing that Birmingham's phone was ringing off the hook with people concerned about Hurricane Dorian hitting Alabama after the President's tweet. Nonetheless, Birmingham's tweet emphatically stating the hurricane would NOT hit Alabama conflicted with NOAA's graphics. It was a missed opportunity to educate residents and inconsistent with NOAA's goal of reducing injury and death from storms.

As a former pediatric intensive care nurse at Texas Children's Hospital, I remember hospital hurricane preparation for Hurricane Allen. In 1983, the eye of Hurricane Alicia passed over my home. During this time I held a federally grant funded position as the Nurse Coordinator for the Gulf States Hemophilia Center, Houston, Texas. I was calling The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Atlanta office weekly for updates following its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) of the first 3 cases of pneumocystis pneumonia in boys with hemophilia. We relied on the best scientific information available, including that compiled by government, to make the best clinical decisions. AIDS became a political issue, however, and thousands died because it was not classified as a STD which would have entailed contact tracing. I am well aware of political decision-making versus scientific decision making.

More recently, as an insurance defense attorney, I am well aware of the conflict between insurance carriers regarding coverage for water damage from wind, wind driven rain, versus flooding. Some property owners in the Panhandle still have not had their structures fixed following Hurricane Michael's destructive path.

As a former elected official, I am aware of the fiscal impact of federal and state declarations for disaster. I am also aware of political agendas and the media's desperation for viewership. (Ditto for some government officials). A former civil engineer for our fair city recommended the closing of 1 of 4 sewer treatment

plants before the completed expansion of one of the other plants. ONE BILLION gallons of raw and partially treated sewer later, our community is still trying to recover. And, he was never held accountable. He resigned to save his pension benefits after the first disastrous dump.

Clearly, Birmingham's tweet conflicted with the NOAA graphics and the goal of getting the public to keep an eye on a potentially much larger area which could be impacted. Your very public letter promising an investigation has already damaged NOAA's reputation with the public. Not a good thing in the middle of hurricane season, in my opinion.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Sweeney Ford, Esq.

Attorney at Law

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University of Virginia, BSN
South Texas College of Law

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Kathleen Ford** <(b)(6)>

Date: Fri, Sep 6, 2019 at 11:56 AM

Subject: Birmingham, Alabama's National Weather Service Tweet contradicting NOAA'S graphics

To: <mary.erickson@noaa.gov>

Cc: <Paul.Dellegatto@foxtv.com>

Dear Ms. Erickson,

It appears Birmingham National Weather Service's September 1, 2019 tweet "Alabama will NOT see any impacts from #Dorian. We repeat, no impacts from Hurricane #Dorian will be felt across Alabama. The system will remain too far east" contradicted NOAA's graphics at that time which showed a chance that Alabama would experience tropical storm force winds.

Earlier advisories (Advisory 21, for example) showed a significant portion of the State of Alabama in NOAA's "Earliest Reasonable Arrival of Tropical Storm Force Winds" graphic, which probably factored into the Alabama Governor's activation of the Alabama National Guard on August 30, 2019 where it described in its tweet August 30, 2019 at 10:11 AM

"#HurricaneDorian is projected to reach southern Alabama by the early part of the week. We are watching closely and #ready to act. Are you?"

National Hurricane Center Advisories #32 to #39 from Sept 1, 2019 at 5:00pm EST to September 2, 2019 at 5:00 pm EST, posted on the National Hurricane/ NOAA's website, are accompanied with graphics clearly showing the southeastern part of the State of Alabama in the graphics for the "Earliest Reasonable Arrival time of Tropical-Storm-Force Winds". The 5 day chance was low, nonetheless, it was still a risk.

As a consequence of the Birmingham Weather Service's tweet which conflicted with NOAA's graphics we have witnessed over 5 days of hysterical media stories criticizing President Trump for his statement that Hurricane Dorian could hit Alabama.

After preparing for 4 hurricanes in 6 weeks in 2004, then seeing the utter devastation in Punta Gorda after Hurricane Charlie hit, I understand and appreciate why NOAA and NHC are trying to get the public to focus beyond just the cone and not just on the line in the cone. I believe that is why NOAA's cone graphic states at the top "The cone contains the probable path of the storm center but does not show the size of the storm. Hazardous conditions can occur outside of the cone." I also believe that is why President Trump's advisors advised him to focus beyond the cone to the larger areas described in NOAA's other graphics.

We are still in the middle of Hurricane season and Birmingham has created a real problem, in my opinion, by undermining the President as he tries to prepare the potentially impacted public for future storms. Like it or not, President Trump has a much larger media following than the main stream media which has been lying to the public for the last three years about President Trump colluding with the Russians.

Since NOAA's graphics showed part of Alabama still in the wind graphics, Birmingham Weather Service #alws' September 1 tweet seemed politically motivated. Moreover, ALWX missed an opportunity to educate the public about over-reliance on the hurricane cone, the uncertainty of the path and the potential for harm outside the "cone". This needs to be publically addressed from the top of your organization, in my opinion. Weather tweets should not be politically motivated and ALWX's tweets seemed to me to be just that.

Sincerely,

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Kathleen Sweeney Ford

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