

Nicole LeBoeuf

From: Nicole LeBoeuf
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 1:22 PM
To: benjamin.friedman@noaa.gov
Subject: Fwd: Allegation of Scientific Misconduct at NOAA

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Carl Childs - NOAA Federal <carl.childs@noaa.gov>
Date: September 10, 2019 at 12:55:43 PM EDT
To: _NOS ORR ERD <nos.orr.erd@noaa.gov>, "Dave.Westerholm" <Dave.Westerholm@noaa.gov>, Nicole Le Boeuf <Nicole.Leboeuf@noaa.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Allegation of Scientific Misconduct at NOAA

All,

I wanted to let you know that in my capacity as chapter president of IFPTE 8A I have just filled an official allegation of scientific misconduct regarding last weeks events surrounding the forecasts for hurricane Dorian.

NOAA has a very strong and clear set of policies to protect our scientific integrity, a tradition which makes me proud to be a NOAA employee. I am confident that these allegations will be thoroughly and adequately investigated by the NOAA employees charged with implementing these policies. Please know that I will do everything that I can to defend these principles and ensure that we can continue to provide the best scientific advice to protect the American people. Keep up the good work.

Carl

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

From: Carl Childs - NOAA Federal <carl.childs@noaa.gov>
Date: Tue, Sep 10, 2019 at 11:32 AM
Subject: Allegation of Scientific Misconduct at NOAA
To: _DUS Scientific And Research Misconduct <research.misconduct@noaa.gov>

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in regard to the series of events that occurred last week surrounding warnings and advisories from the federal government about the approach of hurricane Dorian. Several of these events constitute scientific misconduct under NOAA's Scientific

Integrity Policy (NAO 202-735D).

On the morning of Sept. 1, the President tweeted that Alabama, as well as Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia, would “most likely be hit (much) harder than anticipated.” This did not agree with the National Hurricane Center (Miami FL) discussion 32, produced at 0500 EDT on Sept 1 by Forecaster Pasch, or any later discussions.

It is unclear what led up to the President's mistaken remarks. He may have received an inadequate briefing by representatives of the agency or he may have disregarded what he was told. Regardless of the reason, the statements of the President regarding potential hazards from Dorian in the state of Alabama were incorrect.

About 20 minutes after the President's tweets, the National Weather Service's (NWS) Weather Forecast Office (WFO) in Birmingham, Ala., appeared to [step in on Twitter](#) to clear up the confusion about the storm's effects on the state.

“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.”

Misleading guidance from any part of the Federal government regarding threats to the public health and welfare are potentially dangerous in and of themselves. The quick response of the Birmingham WFO was entirely necessary and appropriate to counter a high profile incorrect message affecting public safety. Additionally, this statement as well as the forecasted hurricane impact maps constitute emergency official communications, covered by Department of Commerce Directive DAO- 209-Section 10. As such, they may be made “without first obtaining approval, so long as the procedures of the relevant operating unit (if any) are followed and applicable law is complied with.”

The White House subsequently released an altered NWS forecast of the hurricane risk area (“the Sharpie map”). It is unclear who was responsible for this modification. If this alteration was done by a NOAA employee then this constitutes a clear violation of NAO 202-735D on the grounds of falsifying data. It is also possible that this alteration of the forecast trajectory could constitute a crime as a counterfeit forecast under 18 U.S. Code § 2074.

On September 6, with no attribution to a specific official, NOAA public relations released the following statement

“From Wednesday, August 28, through Monday, September 2, the information provided by NOAA and the National Hurricane Center to President Trump and the wider public demonstrated that tropical-storm-force winds from Hurricane Dorian could impact Alabama. This is clearly demonstrated in Hurricane Advisories #15 through #41, which can be viewed at the following link (not provided here).”

“The Birmingham National Weather Service's Sunday morning tweet spoke in absolute terms that were inconsistent with probabilities from the best forecast products available at the time.”

No attempt was apparently made to contact the NOAA staff who generated the original (unmodified) hurricane forecast before the statement release. The September 6 statement

was an intentional misrepresentation of scientific findings that damages the scientific standing of the NWS and the entire agency. It casts unwarranted doubt on the performance of NWS forecasters and jeopardizes public faith in NOAA as an impartial communicator of vital public safety information. It is clear that the statement from NOAA management serves only to deflect criticism of the source of the misleading information at the expense of NWS employees who safeguarded the public in a manner consistent with the best scientific information available.

NAO 202-735D: (Scientific Integrity) Section 7.01 requires that appropriate rules and procedures are in place and implemented to preserve the integrity of the scientific process and the dissemination of its scientific products and information, including providing scientists the right to review and correct any official document (such as a press release or report) that cites or references their scientific work, to ensure that accuracy has been maintained after the clearance and editing process.

This was not done in the September 6 release.

Section 8.01 of the same directive says that Scientific and Research Misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing scientific and research activities, or in the products or reporting of these activities. Scientific and Research Misconduct specifically includes: intentional circumvention of the integrity of the science and research process by violation of NOAA's Code of Ethics for Science Supervision and Management; and actions that compromise the scientific process by violating NOAA's Code of Scientific Conduct. At minimum, there is the appearance of violation of Section 8.01 by NOAA Public Affairs.

I am the president of the bargaining unit representing the scientists in NOAA's Emergency Response Division (OR&R/NOS) and this matter is of immediate and direct concern to our members. We are charged with providing scientific assessments of the threat to the public welfare resulting from natural disasters, oil spills and hazardous materials releases. We cannot be expected to perform these critical responsibilities in an environment where our own leadership will second guess our judgement based on trivial political concerns. I look forward to your rapid response and the results of your investigation into these clear violations of our Scientific Integrity Policy.

Respectfully,
Carl R. Childs, Ph.D
President, ERD Chapter
IFPTE Local 8A

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Carl Childs Ph.D.
NOAA Emergency Response

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