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Wednesday, April 8th, 2020 is #SafePlaceSelfie Day!

By: Dan Noah

Post your #SafePlaceSelfie at 11:11am local time!

If there was one extreme weather preparedness action you want your loved ones to take, what would it be? For many, that one action is to know ahead of time where their safe place is located. On April 8th, 2020, at 11:11am local time, please join the National Weather Service and its Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors to take a "selfie" and post with the hashtag #SafePlaceSelfie.

Here are some helpful tips as you take a big step toward greater preparedness:

Step #1: Think about what hazards are relevant to your area and those locations where you spend lots of time.

- These can be frequent hazards like lightning, flash flooding, or extreme heat, or can be rare but high-impact hazards such as a tsunami.
- Don't limit yourself to just one selfie post. Take selfies in various locations dependent on these different hazards. For instance, your car can be an effective refuge from lightning, but is a dangerous option during a tornado warning or flash flooding. Home, office, school, gym, and athletic fields are all great locations to identify your safe place.
- Maybe your most common hazards aren't exactly weather events -- wildfires, rough surf/rip currents, earthquakes. These are all good hazards to know your safe place.

Step #2: Get Creative.

- Have pets or children? Get them involved in the creative process. Have a pet? What is your plan for them if extreme winds threaten your home? Make things fun by including things you have in your emergency kit.
- Bend the rules by thinking beyond just a physical location. For example, your safe location may be anywhere you have access to lifesaving warnings (e.g., NOAA Weather Radio, FEMA or commercial app) or could be your proximity to safety (e.g., swimming near lifeguard stands or with a swim buddy)

Step #3: Challenge others by tagging them in your post.

- "Hey, @_____, where is your safe place when extreme weather threatens?"
- Encouraging others to participate makes you a force multiplier that could result in saving lives.

Step #4: Follow the action throughout the day.

- Stay engaged by replying to, liking, and/or retweeting your favorite #SafePlaceSelfies.

Visit https://weather.gov/wrn/safeplaceselfie for more information.

Meteorology Students Visit the National Weather Service Tampa Bay

By: Austen Flannery

On Tuesday, February 25th, students from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's student-run chapter of the American Meteorological Society/National Weather Association spent an evening with Meteorologists from the National Weather Service Tampa Bay. For many students, this was their first opportunity to visit a forecast office and learn how the NWS operates. Students were given a tour of the facilities, an introduction to the software used to visualize weather data, and a presentation on the history of weather forecasting and how this translates to the Weather-Ready Nation goal the NWS carries out today. The evening culminated with members of the group having the opportunity to assist meteorologist Austen Flannery with the nightly balloon launch. The flight provided invaluable data for the forecasters on shift to better analyze the environment ahead of a storm system moving into the area later that same week.

The opportunity to share our passion for weather with students is a fun part of our job. In order to continue to carry out our mission of protecting lives and property, sharing our knowledge with up-and-coming professionals is extremely important. This ensures that we are able to continue to provide services to our many communities across West Central and Southwest Florida 24/7.

NOAA Accelerates Advancement of Numerical Weather Prediction

By: Dan Noah

On March 11, NOAA released the first version of user-friendly code for medium-range weather prediction in an open, collaborative development environment. This new approach of collaborating across the Weather Enterprise is an effort to engage the community to improve NOAA models using the Unified Forecast System (UFS).

Sharing this code will enable academic and industry researchers to help NOAA accelerate the transition of research innovations into operations. This UFS code is being developed by a broad community and is openly available to the public, with documentation and support for users. In February 2019, NOAA and NCAR announced a partnership to design a common modeling infrastructure, marking NOAA's shift toward community modeling.

"Sharing NOAA's model code with the broader scientific community will help us accelerate model advancements — with the ultimate goal of co-creating the best operational numerical prediction system in the world," said Neil Jacobs, Ph.D., acting NOAA administrator. "We invite researchers and modelers around the world to download and work with the code, so together we can advance numerical weather prediction to improve life-saving forecasts and warnings."

On the heels of a major supercomputer upgrade announced in February and an upgrade to its Global Forecast System last summer, NOAA is pressing forward with this next step in the effort to build a true community weather forecast model and improve forecast accuracy to save lives and protect property nationwide.

Tampa Bay area Ruskin Hydro Workshop 2020

By: Eric Oglesby

The National Weather Service Tampa Bay area Ruskin (TBW) held a Hydro Workshop on Thursday February 20, 2020. The workshop began with a virtual presentation from Service Coordination Hydrologist Todd Hamill at the Southeast River Forecast Center (SERFC) in Peachtree City, GA. Todd discussed activities and services provided by the SERFC to the local offices, and the process of creating river flood forecasts for west central Florida. He also discussed the collaborative effort that takes place with the local offices and how communication is crucial to the forecast process.

The next presentation was given by Kevin Grimsley, the Hydrologic Data Chief from the USGS office in Tampa. He showed examples of different types of gaging equipment used in the field, and discussed the overall role the USGS plays with coordinating gage locations, collecting data, and working with the National Weather Service to promote river flood services.

Workshop participants then traveled to Hillsborough River State Park, a relatively nearby official forecast point. Most had never been to an official site, and Kevin Grimsley described the different pieces of equipment in the gage housing that collect and transmit the data. He also discussed how measurements are taken that help create rating curves.

Then it was on to the C.W. Bill Young Reservoir managed by Tampa Bay Water. The reservoir provides drinking water to about ¼ of its service area in the Tampa Bay region. It's an impressively large earthen dam that can hold 15.5 billion gallons of water, and was at near capacity the day of our visit. It's quite a surprise to see such a large facility in our own backyard, and most were unaware of its existence as it sits in the more rural part of eastern Hillsborough county. Jon Kennedy and Curt Wade from Tampa Bay Water provided a tour of the facility.

Finally, the group returned to the NWS Ruskin office, with Eric Oglesby, the Service Hydrologist, providing the final presentation. He delivered a detailed look at all 21 forecast points across west central Florida and the problem areas associated with each location. It also included information regarding local riverine effects due to topography and natural flood plain considerations.