

Christopher Vaccaro - NOAA Federal

From: Christopher Vaccaro - NOAA Federal
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 12:13 PM
To: Julie Roberts - NOAA Federal; Scott Smullen; Susan Buchanan
Subject: (EXPANDED) AP: NOAA chief thanks Alabama weather office in Dorian forecast

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2019/09/10/noaa-chief-thanks-alabama-weather-office-dorian-forecast/40107991/>

NOAA chief thanks Alabama weather office in Dorian forecast

Huntsville, Ala. – The head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration both defended the administration on Tuesday and thanked a local weather office that contradicted President Donald Trump's claims about Hurricane Dorian threatening Alabama.

Acting administrator Neil Jacobs told a meteorology group that a NOAA statement which criticized the Birmingham-area forecast office after it disagreed with Trump was meant to clarify "technical aspects" about Dorian's potential impact.

"What it did not say, however, was that we understood and fully support the good intent of the weather office, which was to calm fears in support of public safety," said Jacobs.

The acting chief scientist at NOAA previously said the agency likely violated its scientific integrity rules last week when it publicly chastised the office in an unsigned statement issued late Friday.

Jacobs, a career meteorologist, appeared near tears at the lectern as he thanked the Birmingham office and mentioned Kevin Laws, a staff leader who was in the audience.

"This is hard for me," said Jacobs, his voice choked.

Laws, science and operations officer with the weather service office in Birmingham, said he appreciated the remarks by Jacobs, who he has known for 20 years.

"Absolutely no hard feelings," Laws said.

Weather officials said Birmingham forecasters didn't realize that rumors about Dorian threatening to hit the state began with a tweet by Trump, who apparently relied on information that was several days old when he sent the message. The office issued a tweet of its own saying Alabama wasn't at risk.

Laws said Birmingham forecasters working in the agency's suburban office on Sept. 1 were having a quiet morning when the phones suddenly lit up.

"We got calls about people having surgery and should they cancel. We got calls about 'Should I go get my elderly parents?' There were so many concerns," he said in an interview.

Forecasters didn't know what had happened until reaction started on social media, where some accused the staff of purposely attempting to embarrass Trump, Laws said.

“The social media comments started rolling in and then we realized there was more to this than we first thought,” he said.

Jacobs said Dorian presented forecasters with a “particularly difficult” challenge and noted that, early on, the storm did show the possibility of doing something other than veering northward up the East Coast.

“At one point Alabama was in the mix, as was the rest of the Southeast,” he said.

While some forecasters had talked about walking out on Jacobs’ speech or staging some sort of protest, there was no demonstration and he received polite applause.

Jacobs’ remarks came a day after National Weather Service Director Louis Uccellini said forecasters in Birmingham did the right thing Sept. 1 when they tried to combat public panic and rumors that Dorian posed a threat to Alabama.

“They did that with one thing in mind: public safety,” said Uccellini, who prompted a standing ovation by asking members of the Birmingham weather staff to stand.

Laws declined to say exactly who sent the tweet that contradicted the president.

“It came from all of us,” he said.

On Tue, Sep 10, 2019 at 11:40 AM Christopher Vaccaro - NOAA Federal <christopher.vaccaro@noaa.gov> wrote:

<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/us/2019/09/10/noaa-chief-thanks-alabama-weather-office-in-dorian-forecast.html>

NOAA chief thanks Alabama weather office in Dorian forecast

By The Associated Press
Tues., Sept. 10, 2019

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. - The head of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is both defending the administration and thanking a local weather office that contradicted President Donald Trump’s claims about Hurricane Dorian threatening Alabama.

Acting administrator Neil Jacobs told a meteorology group Tuesday that a NOAA statement which criticized a local forecast office that contradicted Trump was meant to clarify “technical aspects” about Dorian’s potential impact.

Jacobs told the group what the statement failed to mention was the “good intent” of the Birmingham office in trying to calm fears and rumours about Dorian hitting Alabama. Jacobs recognized and thanked the Birmingham office while speaking before the National Weather Association in Huntsville, Alabama. He appeared near tears at one point.

Weather officials say Birmingham didn’t realize that rumours about Dorian hitting the state began with a tweet by Trump.

While some forecasters had talked about walking out on Jacobs speech or staging some sort of protest, there was no demonstration and he received polite applause.

Kevin Laws, science and operations officer with the weather service office in Birmingham, said he appreciated the remarks by Jacobs, who he has known for 20 years.

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