

Craig McLean - NOAA Federal

From: Craig McLean - NOAA Federal
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 4:55 PM
To: Sharon Walker - NOAA Federal
Subject: Re: Hurricane Dorian and Exceptional Service

Thank you, Sharon. Your work and that of your colleagues across NOAA is very important. My job is to make sure you can continue uninterrupted or uncorrupted on the amazing path that PMEL has blazed, and as the rest of NOAA pursues.

Keep it up! Thank you for your concern.

CM

On Tue, Sep 10, 2019 at 12:39 AM Sharon Walker - NOAA Federal <sharon.l.walker@noaa.gov> wrote:

Dear Craig,

I want you to know how much I appreciate this email and what you've said here. It's hard to put words to exactly how disappointed I was Friday evening when I got home and saw news about the "NOAA communication" social media post disavowing the Weather Service response to incorrect information. It was like a gut-punch. At no time during my 40 years as a NOAA employee have I ever worried that the administrator and senior leadership did not "have our backs". This was truly a first (and I sincerely hope a LAST).

I immediately thought of a PMEL all-hands meeting many years ago where Eddie Bernard described the importance of knowing when to NOT evacuate, as well as knowing when to call for an evacuation in the threat of a natural disaster. He used the example of a tsunami warning for Honolulu that resulted in evacuation, but the waves that arrived were on the order of centimeters. The excessive cost (emotionally, economically, etc) of the unnecessary evacuation was significant, and he stressed the importance of being able to (a) retain the trust of the public to believe any warnings, (b) to avoid unnecessary hardship when evacuations were really not necessary, and (c) the importance of the research and development required to improve the accuracy of forecasts.

I have appreciated your leadership for OAR for some time now, but I especially appreciate and admire your willingness to address this really, really important issue. I sincerely hope that no harm comes your way for taking this on.

Best regards,

Sharon Walker
PMEL

On Sun, Sep 8, 2019 at 9:58 PM Craig McLean - NOAA Federal <craig.mclean@noaa.gov> wrote:

Dear Colleagues,

The fierce storm we know as Hurricane Dorian has concluded its ferocious path through the Bahamas and along the US East Coast. Many of you have contributed to the excellent science that has underpinned the forecasts and current understanding of storms such as this one, which accelerated quite rapidly in intensity. The storm also presented challenges in track which improved with enhanced observations. We

know that our collective work, from the scientists in the aircraft penetrating the storm, to the scientists deploying the glider picket line, to the modelers and folks working the physics of the storms, across OAR and in our CI's, and across all NOAA Lines, we are working the problem in order to give the NWS forecasters the best tools we possibly can to keep America and our neighbors safe. Thank you.

During the course of the storm, as I am sure you are aware, there were routine and exceptional expert forecasts, the best possible, issued by the NWS Forecasters. These are remarkable colleagues of ours, who receive our products, use them well, and provide the benefit of their own experience in announcing accurate forecasts accompanied by the distinction of all credible scientists -- they sign their work. As I'm sure you also know, there was a complex issue involving the President commenting on the path of the hurricane. The NWS Forecaster(s) corrected any public misunderstanding in an expert and timely way, as they should. There followed, last Friday, an unsigned press release from "NOAA" that inappropriately and incorrectly contradicted the NWS forecaster. My understanding is that this intervention to contradict the forecaster was not based on science but on external factors including reputation and appearance, or simply put, political. Our NOAA Scientific Integrity Policy and Code of Scientific Conduct make clear that all NOAA employees shall approach all scientific activities with honesty, objectively, and completely, without allegiance to individuals, organizations, or ideology. The content of this press release is very concerning as it compromises the ability of NOAA to convey life-saving information necessary to avoid substantial and specific danger to public health and safety. If the public cannot trust our information, or we debase our forecaster's warnings and products, that specific danger arises.

You know that the value of our science is in the complexity of our understanding, our ability to convey that understanding to a wide audience of users of this information, and to establish and sustain the public trust in the truth and legitimacy of that information. Unfortunately, the press release of last Friday violated this trust and violated NOAA's policies of scientific integrity. In my role as Assistant Administrator for Research, and as I continue to administratively serve as Acting Chief Scientist, I am pursuing the potential violations of our NOAA Administrative Order on Scientific Integrity. Thankfully, we have such policies that are independently cited as among the best in the federal community, if not the best. Your NOAA and OAR management and leadership team believes in these policies and principles. I have a responsibility to pursue these truths. I will.

Thank you for your continued excellent work, and your trust. Carry on.

Craig

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