NEWSLETTER

National Weather Association

NO. 98-4

6704 Wolke Court
Montgomery, Alabama 36116-2134

APRIL 1998

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE FUTURE OF WEATHER FORECASTING IS NOW

The data collected by the new sensors associated with the National Weather Service modernization program have given operational meteorologists new windows into the workings of the atmosphere. Enhanced processing capabilities are also becoming available so that today's forecaster can make real-time use of parameters that were formerly found only in the most esoteric research papers.

We can now apply "text-book physics" to creating warnings and forecasts. However, there is a flip side to the new technologies in that it is incumbent upon us all to learn how to interpret and best use the information they give us.

To accomplish this, it is best to work together to further our communal understanding of how these data relate to weather phenomena. Weather forecasting is not a "contest" to see who can make the most accurate predictions, but rather a service industry where information about anticipated weather or its derivatives is provided to customers be they paying clients, or the tax-paying public. To a very large extent each individual forecaster's reputation is based upon the public's perception of the weather forecasting industry as a whole. If weather forecasts are looked on as light entertainment between the news and sports, it is very hard to convince people to take cover when a warning is issued. Sharing our individual insights on how to use the new data with our colleagues will increase the status of our profession as a whole and, in the long run, that of each of its practitioners.

Weather forecasting is a science-based profession. Our capabilities will advance only as long as the science advances. Operational meteorologists should not sit back and wait for a research scientist to discover a real world problem to solve, rather forecasters must be proactive, sharing their successes and challenges with the research community. This will help insure that practical results will be obtained from research efforts. The value of sharing operational data with researchers is shown by the work of Johannes Kepler who developed the laws of planetary motion. These laws were developed through an analysis of the detailed observations made by Tycho Brahe years earlier. While you might not think that your individual work is "high science," it may be the seed from which a major advance in meteorology or hydrology develops.

A third reason for sharing your insights with others is that it helps you to clarify your own thoughts. We all know a forecaster who has a pet technique for some event, but who simply cannot explain exactly what it is to anyone else. By putting your thoughts on paper, you are virtually forced to clarify your thinking, to note "fudge factors," and list exceptions to general rules. While I do not wish to sound like a high school teacher, there is truth to the axiom that if you cannot express an idea in writing, you really do not understand it yourself. Rather than having "trade secrets," it is important that forecasters "trade" secrets and expose them to the light of the scientific method.

As a professional organization for operational meteorologists, the NWA offers a variety of vehicles for its members to let other forecasters know what they are doing. The *National Weather Digest* is our professional publication. It focuses on operationally-oriented, technical papers, and is a platform for "association members and others interested in operational meteorology and related activities to share their experiences, procedures, ideas, research, technical studies, news and announcements." *Digest* submissions are reviewed, but the reviewers are known to the submitters and work constructively with the authors to improve their text. The *Digest* co-editors are Ken Mielke and Captain Pete Roohr. The *NWA Monthly Newsletter* is a less formal publication. It serves to tell NWA members and subscribers current news, or make an announcement concerning operational meteorology and related activities. Items that you feel should be published can be submitted to co-editors Larry Burch or Eli Jacks. ➡

DATES TO REMEMBER

1 July - Abstracts due for the **17–23 October 1998** NWA Annual Meeting, Oklahoma City, OK. See *Call for Papers* on page 2.

1 July - Nominations due for the NWA Annual Awards and Sol Hirsch NWA Education Fund Grants. See March Newsletter page 4.

Please see Meetings of Interest on page 7.