

Weather service reviews flood warnings

Concerns over effectiveness of rainfall predictions prompt reexamination of performance

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Questions over how well the National Weather Service predicted peak flooding during last month's deadly rains in Central Texas have prompted a formal review of the agency's performance.

Findings are due in January to director John G. Kelly.

"We're asking ourselves hard questions about this event," John Patton, a weather service hydrologist for 26 years, told the San Antonio Express-News.

The 90-day review, initiated Wednesday, seeks to determine why — despite the use of sophisticated radar, computer models, weather spotters and satellite-linked flow gauges — the agency's forecasts were off by as much as two days in predicting when peak flooding would hit downstream communities.

The floods and storms killed at least 29 people and left hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage.

"I didn't have a chance to move anything. I lost everything," 78-year-old Seledona Garcia of Victoria, who was warned to leave immediately just

hours after being told that she would have two or three days to evacuate, said.

Officials say forecasting about river crests was complicated by heavy rains downstream,

"We couldn't keep up with requests for forecasts and emergency officials wanting information."

— John Patton
Weather service hydrologist

record flows that undermined computer models, and by staffing shortages caused by flooding around the weather service offices in New Braunfels.

"We couldn't keep up with requests for forecasts and emergency officials wanting informa-

tion," Patton, who put in several 20-hour days at the height of the flooding, said.

Forecasters' jobs were complicated further because some U.S. Geological Service river gauges malfunctioned while underwater and could not transmit data.

But, officials said, predictions of severe flooding were broadcast early and often, a clear indication that trouble was in store for Cuero, Goliad, Gonzales, Victoria and other communities along the Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers.

The Guadalupe River peaked in Cuero late Oct. 19. Until that day, the weather service had forecast it would crest Oct. 21.

Luther Boysen, emergency management coordinator for Cuero, said that the suddenness of the flooding left him little time to post the hundreds of evacuation notices that had been printed.

"We were sitting here looking stupid because we didn't get the people evacuated," he said. "It appeared perhaps we were not monitoring the river and appropriately advising them."

First female football kicker named homecoming queen

HOUSTON (AP) — This year's homecoming queen at Westbury High School credits her on-the-field performance for raising her profile. But it was not cheerleading that caused Cindy Wright's stock to rise.

It was Wright's success as a place kicker for her school's varsity football team.

Last month, Wright became the first female to score in a Houston Independent School District game. On Friday, her classmates voted to crown their gridiron hero, homecoming queen.

"I think the only reason I was homecoming queen was because I

was playing football — but that's fine with me," Wright said of Friday night's homecoming activities.

Since joining the team, Wright has kicked 15 points-after-touchdown for the Rebels.

As a result of her on-field exploits, Wright said her popularity has soared. At the urging of friends she entered the school's homecoming competition and, to her surprise, won.

At games her friends have lobbied for the female kicker, some toting banners such as "Crown the kicker" to the game.

She is loving every minute of it,

walking onto the field one moment as a focused football player and the next as homecoming queen. It has made for a special senior year.

"I get to keep the crown and the flowers," she said. "But most of all I get to keep all the memories."

A straight-A senior, Ms. Wright plans to attend a major college such as University of Colorado or University of Texas next year and major in pre-med. She wants to eventually combine her love for children and interest in medicine by becoming a pediatrician or a dentist. She also plans to continue playing soccer in college.

Her venture into high-school foot-

ball began last spring when Westbury soccer coach Matthew Caulkins asked her about kicking a different kind of ball. Football coach George Campbell saw her hit a 40-yard field goal and asked her to join the team.

She accepted — despite initial protests from her parents, who worried about possible injuries.

"My dad thought I was crazy and my mom thought I was psycho," Wright said.

But no injuries have occurred — she said the guys on the team are very protective — and her parents have come around, now videotaping every kick.

Candidates get ready for Tuesday elections

AUSTIN (AP) — As the final minutes of the 1998 election campaign ticked away Sunday, candidates for state office worked to get voters to the polls on Tuesday and tossed final jobs at their opponents.



BUSH

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Garry Mauro spoke to four church congregations in the Houston area, spokesperson John Hannah said.

Mauro has scheduled stops in Brownsville and Corpus Christi, Hannah said.

"The message was getting out the vote, which it has been for a while," Hannah said.

Gov. George W. Bush's spokesperson, Mindy Tucker, said Bush's only public appearance Sunday was participating in a breast cancer awareness run in Austin.

"He tries not to campaign on Sundays," she said. But Bush had several stops planned for Monday, Tucker said. "He's been in three cities a day since last Monday in an effort to remind people to vote."

Based on early voting totals, only about 30 percent of the state's 11.5 million registered voters are expected to cast ballots, according to the secretary

of state.

Though opinion polls showed Bush with a significant lead over Mauro, voters still must show up, Tucker said.

"No matter what the polls say it's important for people to vote," she said.

Mauro's campaign continued to dismiss the polls Sunday. "Garry Mauro is poised for a major upset," Hannah said.

Bush is supported by 70 percent of likely voters, compared to 23 percent for Mauro, according to a poll by *The Dallas Morning News* and *Houston Chronicle*. The rest of the respondents were undecided.

"That's absolutely ridiculous," Hannah said. Those polls historically under sample Hispanic voters, who will be a factor in the election, he said.



MAURO

But a recent *El Paso Times*/KVIA-7 poll indicated that Bush could become the first Republican gubernatorial candidate to carry El Paso County, a heavily Hispanic area.

That survey found Bush supported by 51 percent of likely voters in the county, compared to 37 percent for Mauro and 1 percent for Libertarian Lester Turlington.

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If you are interested in getting our pre-select interviewing schedule: 1.) register with the Career Center to interview on-campus, and 2.) request that the Career Center submit your resume to Alcoa.

Alcoa will be hosting a reception on Thursday, November 12th, at 7:00 - 8:15 p.m. at Memorial Student Center, Room 231. All students interested in meeting with Alcoa representatives are welcome.

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