
The NWS Detroit Underserved and Vulnerable Communities (UVC) Program Reaches One-Year Milestone

By: Steve Considine, Senior Forecaster and UVC Program Leader at NWS Detroit

This spring marked one year since NWS Detroit initiated a program solely devoted to enhancing services to underserved and vulnerable communities. It is estimated around 1.5 million people within the NWS Detroit forecast area are a part of these communities. The initiatives developed in this first year have been specifically geared toward the economically disadvantaged and those who do not speak English.

Informational Guides

Detroit specific informational guides with respect to flooding and urban heat islands were sent to Detroit Emergency Management and the American Red Cross. A mobile/manufactured home safety campaign was also conducted during the 2023 Michigan Severe Weather Awareness week. There are around 480 mobile/manufactured home parks in rural, suburban and urban portions of the WFO Detroit forecast area. The mobile/manufactured home safety campaign included distribution of NWS mobile home tornado safety material through social media and county specific information sent to every county emergency manager in the NWS Detroit forecast area.

Skywarn Engagement

Increasing community engagement is another main component of the NWS Detroit UVC program. To fully promote the NWS to underserved communities, it is important to be seen and heard within the local communities. Receiving weather reports from underserved communities has long been a challenge. Even getting participation in Skywarn from these communities has been difficult. This year, NWS Detroit was able to form a partnership with the Detroit Public Library, which has agreed to host both severe and winter Skywarn/safety presentations. WFO Detroit, the Detroit Public Library, and the Detroit Department of Homeland Security/Emergency Management have actively promoted these presentations. This resulted in a respectable size of attendees at the Spring 2023 Skywarn presentation in Detroit. Another aspect of community engagement has involved sending fall and spring newsletters to the city of Detroit and neighboring communities, area non-profits, aid agencies, and local places of worship. The purpose of these newsletters is to educate the community about NWS Detroit products and services, to highlight recent high impact weather events and to promote upcoming NWS Detroit outreach events in the area and other UVC initiatives. Similar newsletters are going to be done for Flint and Saginaw starting next fall.

Multicultural Communities Ambassadors

The other major component of the UVC program has been to form partnerships with organizations that work directly with UVCs. This will be a long-term endeavor in the coming years. The organizations that work with UVCs within the NWS Detroit forecast area range from very small (e.g., local places of worship) to those on the national level (e.g., United Way and NAACP). This amounts to dozens if not hundreds of organizations across the NWS Detroit forecast area. To most effectively forge partnerships with so many organizations, NWS Detroit has created a local subset of the Weather Ready Nation Ambassador Initiative called the Multicultural Communities (MC) Ambassador. The MC Ambassadors receive our weather messages and are provided a means to directly contact NWS Detroit 24/7. The ambassadors are also given a directory of where to find key National Weather Service forecast information. An added layer of service to these organizations is that the NWS Detroit UVC Program Leader sends weather safety/preparedness material to each MC Ambassadors from time-to-time and serves as a direct liaison between each MC Ambassador and the communities they serve. The MC Ambassadors are encouraged to distribute weather forecast and safety material to their communities and/or other agencies that serve those communities.



NWS Detroit began the MC Ambassador initiative in February 2023. Our first Ambassador, Centro Multicultural La Familia, is a nonprofit organization based in Pontiac, MI that serves the local Hispanic communities and runs a Spanish language radio station. The radio station has been broadcasting weather information they receive from us in Spanish. This organization has also become a full-fledged WRN Ambassador. Another organization we have teamed up with is Cafecito Caliente, a non-profit that focuses on Hispanic leadership across Michigan. Metro Detroit has the largest Arab population in the United States. Arabicdetroit.com and Radio CINA 102.3 FM provide local news and weather in Arabic to metro Detroit. They have agreed to help communicate high impact weather forecasts and safety information in Arabic to the many people of metro Detroit of Arab descent who have limited English proficiency. Finally, the City of Detroit Department of Neighborhoods has joined the MC Ambassador initiative. This is a department within the city that provides a direct link between the city and block clubs, community groups, business owners, faith and school leaders, and everyday residents of the city of Detroit. The expectation is for these organizations to also become full-fledged WRN Ambassadors as our partnership grows.



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NOAA's National Weather Service, Analyze, Forecast and Support Office

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Aware online: www.weather.gov/publications/aware | ISSN 1936-8178

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