



Be a Force of Nature

A NOAA and FEMA Public Education Campaign

Because a truly Weather-Ready Nation requires the action of each person and community, NOAA's National Weather Service and FEMA are leading a public education effort aimed at improving the way people respond to severe weather warnings.

To prepare for this campaign, NOAA studied how to best motivate people to take action to save lives and property. We knew we needed a motivating message that would inspire people to not only take appropriate action in the face of severe weather (go to shelter), but to also model that behavior for others in their social network. From NOAA service assessments after the 2011 outbreaks in Alabama and Joplin, we know that some people will go to shelter immediately after hearing a warning on NOAA Weather Radio or on television. However, most people typically wait for secondary confirmation before taking shelter. Social science research confirms this and finds that people are more likely to take preparedness measures in advance and action during an event when they observe others doing so.

After careful research and analysis, NOAA developed a creative message designed to empower those people who take immediate action and go to shelter to then share through cell phones with their social network that they are safely sheltered. In so doing, they are modeling the appropriate action for others to follow. People who respect them will soon do the same thing.

The message NOAA selected was *Be a Force of Nature*. Being a force of nature means never bowing to extreme weather. It means taking appropriate actions before, during and after extreme weather. Even more than that, being a force of nature means inspiring others to do the same. This is what makes the Weather-Ready Nation campaign different than earlier campaigns.

We've seen countless examples of forces of nature in recent months: There was [Stephanie Decker](#) in Indiana, who after receiving a timely text from her husband about an imminent tornado, took immediate action and gathered her children in the basement. Shielding them from collapsing debris, Stephanie tragically lost parts of both of her legs, but her children were unharmed. [Lisa Rebstock](#) in Texas saved the lives of her children by being prepared with a plan and a kit before the storm struck. Eighty eight-year-old [Wilma Nelson](#) survived the deadliest tornado in Oklahoma history in 1947 and proved her force of nature status yet again. She said she owes her life to a NOAA Weather Radio that alerted her of the tornado that struck Woodward, Okla., April 15, 2012. Forces of nature are out there and our campaign seeks to multiply their impact by starting a national movement for preparedness.

Be a Force of Nature is the theme of FEMA and NOAA's National Severe Weather Preparedness Week. NOAA envisions similar co-branded efforts with other members of the risk management

community, academia and America's weather and climate industry. In the future, we can encourage the public to be a force of nature when it comes to hurricanes, floods, lightning and any other number of extreme weather phenomena.

That is how *Be a Force of Nature* is working at the NWS, but we envision a much broader scope for the *Be a Force of Nature* concept. Nature extends beyond weather, just as NOAA's reach extends beyond weather. What about NOAA's other strategic priorities? The Ocean Service can certainly call on the public to be forces of nature when it comes to Healthy Oceans and Coasts, for example. Internally, the brand validates the work NOAA employees do every day across the agency and serves as a rallying cry to *Be a Force of Nature* and take back the planet.

Elevating the *Be a Force of Nature* brand to a NOAA-wide level will help integrate the efforts across NOAA and facilitate the communication of NOAA's accomplishments to the public.

References:

Red Cross Social Media in Disasters and Emergencies

<http://www.redcross.org/www-files/Documents/pdf/other/SocialMediaSlideDeck.pdf>

CDC Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/CERC/>