

CONSIDERING AN EXTRA TROPICAL STORM SURGE WATCH AND WARNING: FORECASTER AND PARTNER FEEDBACK

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Beginning with the 2015 hurricane season, the National Weather Service will offer a prototype storm surge watch and warning graphic to highlight those areas along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts of the United States that have a significant risk of life-threatening inundation by storm surge from a tropical cyclone.

The National Hurricane Center has also developed a map to depict potential storm surge flooding from a tropical cyclone. The NWS is interested in whether similar products would be useful for extratropical storms as well. More specifically, the NWS is looking for guidance on if an extra tropical storm surge watch and warning should replace or add to the current suite of coastal flood watches and warnings.

To understand NWS partner perspectives on this issue, Eastern Research Group (ERG) conducted 3 phases of research including 1.) 12 interviews with NWS warning forecast offices (WFO), 2.) Focus groups in Alaska with the WFO, broadcast meteorologists, radio hosts, emergency managers, and tribal communities, and lastly, 3.) Three focus group trips (New York City, NY; Norfolk, VA; Portland, OR) to speak with broadcast meteorologists and emergency managers.

For many reasons, the overwhelming majority see a need for a storm surge warning for extreme extra tropical events, but feel that adding the product to the current suite is more productive than replacing the coastal flood watch and warning. All agree that outreach and education will be required as the phrase storm surge is traditionally associated with tropical systems and may cause confusion. The complexity surrounding this partner feedback will be discussed.