



Earth Gauge

A National Environmental Education Foundation Program

National Weatherman's Day

Every year, February 5 marks **National Weatherman's Day**. This day is dedicated to recognizing the men and women who strive to inform Americans with the best weather forecasts and protect them severe weather warnings. National Weatherman's Day commemorates the birth of **John Jeffries** in 1744. Jeffries was one of the first weather observers in America. He began taking weather observations in Boston in 1774 and took the first balloon observation in 1784.



Dedicated meteorologists work around the clock to create the best forecast they can to help you plan your day, as well as issue warnings to help keep you safe. These warnings save lives by informing the public as soon as possible about tornadoes, hurricanes, severe thunderstorms and other weather conditions.

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

The National Weather Service (NWS) was established on February 9, 1870 and operates with the mission "to provide the American public with the best possible warning service to save lives." Over the years, there have been great advances in collecting weather observations and making forecasts. In 1894, William Eddy made the first observations of temperatures aloft with self-recording thermometers attached to five kites. In 1935, the first hurricane warning system was established and in 1950, NWS began issuing 30-day weather outlooks. In 1996, NWS provided forecasting support for the Atlanta Olympics. Last year, NWS began using a forecast model that greatly improves predictions of space weather and its impacts on Earth.

At local NWS offices, meteorologists gather and analyze weather data and study computer models to formulate warnings. Several statistics show how much lead times for notifying the public about severe weather have improved:

- Lead time for flash flood warnings improved from 22 minutes in 1993 to 78 minutes in 2008. Accuracy increased from 71 percent to 91 percent over the same time period.
- Lead time for tornado warnings has risen from six minutes in 1993 to 13 minutes today, with accuracy going up to 73 percent from 43 percent.
- Winter storm accuracy in 2008 was at an impressive 89 percent with average lead times of 17 hours.

NWS also relies on the help of volunteers – there are nearly 300,000 volunteers all over the United States that are trained by NWS to provide real-time reports of severe weather conditions to their local forecast offices.

TELEVISION WEATHERCASTERS

When it comes to reporting the weather on television, broadcast meteorologists have been the faces of weather for the past half-century. They are trusted individuals who many people rely on to convey easy-to-understand weather information. Many weathercasters are also embracing the role of "station scientist," informing their viewers not just about the weather, but also environmental and earth sciences, climate science, space weather and more.



In 1969, WAVE-TV in Louisville, KY was the first station to employ a certified meteorologist and operate its own weather-forecasting system. Some notable celebrities who started out as television weathercasters are Wheel of Fortune host Pat Sajak, Late Night Talk Show host David Letterman and ABC World News anchor Diane Sawyer.

The Earth Gauge Team thanks all of the weathermen – and women – out there for their hard work!

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 National Environmental
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SOURCES:

National Weather Service. "Evolution of the National Weather Service." <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/pa/history/timeline.php>

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Robert Henson. *Weather on the Air: A History of Broadcast Meteorology*. Boston: American Meteorological Society, 2010. Print.

Images: NOAA and Nick Piesco, KCEN-TV, Waco, TX