

Hurricane Maria Project
Information Providers Interview Guide for:
National Hurricane Center Representatives

OMB Control #0693-0078

Expiration Date: 07-31-2022

Script for Introduction:

“Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. We are interested in your perspective on information and communications related to Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017. We would like to better understand this hurricane because it impacted a non-continental and Spanish-speaking U.S. island. Ideally, these interviews will lead to beneficial recommendations to policy, procedures, and codes. We realize that the hurricane was a few years ago, and some details may not readily come to mind. We will try to walk you through different topics and events to aid your memory, but let us know if you need any clarifications. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, we just want to understand your perspectives and experience. Your responses will never be linked to your individual identity, instead, findings will be attributed to a “Hurricane Information Provider” at the national, commonwealth, regional, or local level, and will only be shared in aggregate detail. Are you ready to begin?”

Required Script for Paperwork Reduction Act:

“A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, nor shall a person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with an information collection subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 unless the information collection has a currently valid OMB Control Number. The approved OMB Control Number for this information collection is 0693-0078. Without this approval, we could not conduct this information collection. Public reporting for this information collection is estimated to be approximately 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the information collection. All responses to this information collection are voluntary. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this information collection, including suggestions for reducing this burden to the National Institute of Standards and Technology at: Katherine Johnson, Social Scientist and National Construction Safety Team Member, NIST Engineering Laboratory; or contact at katherine.johnson@nist.gov.”

Section A: Background Questions

1. Please describe to us the position you held in the days prior to Hurricane Maria.
 - a. How long had you held that position?
2. What were your primary roles and duties in your position with regard to informing or communicating about hurricanes?
3. Who are the groups or individuals you are responsible for communicating to? We will refer to these people in further questions as your “stakeholders”.
4. Before Hurricanes Irma and Maria, can you briefly describe any previous experiences you’ve had with hurricanes?

Section B: Products and Communication

The next set of questions is about how you communicated information about the hurricane to your stakeholders.

5. In the days leading up to Hurricane Maria making landfall on Puerto Rico, what were the top threats, or content, you chose to emphasize to your stakeholders?
 - a. What factors influenced your decision to emphasize particular threats?
6. Did the key content (i.e. threat information) change over time?
 - a. If so, what caused it to change?
 - b. Did any uncertainties in the hurricane’s forecast influence this change?
 - c. In comparison, was there particular forecast content that was quite certain?
 - d. How did you message around those or communicate that certainty?
7. What were the key products you used to communicate information? (i.e. *public advisory, forecast, maps/images/graphics, press release, radio announcement, tweets, etc.*)?
8. What channels were primarily used to communicate hurricane information (i.e.; *the media, social media, interviews, phone calls, emails, press conferences, regular products, etc.*)
 - a. Why were these channels used?
 - b. Were you able to use any shared or coordinated resources with outside organizations to disseminate information?
9. Do you remember a point at which you realized this hurricane would be particularly significant for Puerto Rico?
 - a. What information led you to that conclusion?
10. Do you remember a point at which you felt confident enough in forecasts that you would recommend actions, such as evacuation notices, should be taken?
 - a. What actions did you think about and why?

11. What were any problems or challenges related to communicating about this Hurricane as it approached Puerto Rico? Do you remember any common questions or points of confusion you received related to certain products or information?
 - a. How did you decide to message around those challenges, particularly any related to different hazards or uncertainty?
 - b. Did the content, products, or channels you used change to react to these problems?
12. Was there particular content, products or information channels that you think worked well for Hurricane Maria? If so, what contributed to these successes?
13. Was any decision-support assistance provided by yourself or the liaison team to emergency managers and other decision-makers? Do you recall how close or far away (in time) the hurricane was to impacting Puerto Rico when you provided assistance?
 - a. Were there other ways that team members went above-and-beyond to disseminate or explain information to stakeholders?

Section C: Inter-agency Coordination

14. Reflecting back on the hurricane, how well do you think communication and inter-agency coordination (if any) worked between the NHC and different information-providers involved (e.g. WFOs, SERFC, WPC, and OPC, EM's, the media, and the public)?
15. Can you please describe one or two specific examples of communication success between particular organizations, describing what worked well and why?
16. Can you think of one to two examples when communications did not work well, or difficulties that you or coworkers/staff/ or colleagues encountered? Please identify what did not work well (e.g. procedures, systems, personnel, etc.).
 - a. What do you think could be done to improve on these problems?
17. In your perspective, how consistent was information related to Hurricane Maria as it was disseminated throughout the weather community (i.e. NHC, WFOs, meteorologists)?
 - a. Do any key issues seem important to improve effective communication?

Section D. Ending Questions

We're almost finished with the interview. We just have a few last questions.

18. Since Hurricane Maria, were there any new procedures, guidelines, or policy changes that have been developed and/or implemented relating to hurricane

products, communication, and/or interagency coordination? Can you describe these changes or share with us any updated products?

19. If you were to go through an experience like Hurricane Maria again, is there anything you would suggest for yourself or others do differently? Can you explain why and how?
 - a. Are there any new products, rules, or services that would aid in the changes you would suggest? If so, which ones (and how would they be used)?
20. Before we go, is there anyone else whom you think we should reach out to for an interview on these topics? (e.g., someone influential in communicating hurricane risks, forecasts, etc. to the public)
21. Thank you for your time. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us that we didn't already discuss?