

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol Professional Autobiography

Tell me a bit about your background – Where are you originally from/where did you grow up?
What is your field of specialty? How did you come to choose to be a _____?

Tell me a bit more about your professional history as a meteorologist — where have you been a meteorologist (other WFOs? private sector? military?) and what did you do then? What is different about your current position/WFO?

What is your role at the WFO? Tell me what that means and what you do on a day-to-day basis.
What do you do during a severe weather event?

Tell me about what makes your current WFO stand out or unique — what are the things you deal with that make WFO ___ WFO ___?

Forecasting/Modeling

What, in your own terms, is the difference between forecasting and model output/guidance in your own experiences at NWC? [*Follow-ups depending upon response to initial prompt: How do you distinguish between the two on a day-to-day, real-world basis in your work? How does “tracking” a storm – for instance, during a severe weather event – relate to forecasting and how does it relate to modeling?*]

What are the basic elements that your office always includes in briefings to EMs and other key partners?

What roles have/do you play in putting together briefings?

- [FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCES AT MULTIPLE OFFICES] What differences have you observed at the different offices you’ve at?
- To what do you attribute those differences between offices?

What about the information that you provide to the public? What is different about what you include for the EMs versus the public?

When you’re putting together information on the *timing* of upcoming weather, what aspects of timing do you usually include (PROMPTS: start time? end time? duration?)

When you have a forecast for tornado, severe wind, or hail, what kinds of questions do you get from EMs and other core partners?

- (if they bring up confidence or gut feeling:) When they ask about confidence, what are they looking for?
- Is there a difference between confidence and probability?

HOW DO *YOU* BECOME CONFIDENT IN THE FORECAST YOU PUT TOGETHER [FROM THE MODELS AND OTHER OBSERVATIONAL GUIDANCE]?

Technology

What kinds of observational platforms or technologies – different forms of radar, remote sensing, etc. – do you use in your work?

Do you directly work on developing these technologies? [If *yes*: Please describe your work on these technologies. How do you think that other weather scientists use these technologies?]

Do you indirectly work on developing these technologies (for instance, working on refining software that can be used in these technologies)? [If *yes*: Please describe your work on these technologies. How do you think that other weather scientists use these technologies?]

Do you only use the *data* from these technologies?

How confident do you feel, in general, that the data that comes to you from these observational platforms — radar, soundings, etc. — is error-free or reliable? How much do you trust it to reflect what is happening in the “real world”?

- [FOLLOW-UP IF THEY SAY “A LOT” OR “ENTIRELY”, ETC.: If, in 10 years, we have new technology that provides us with an order of magnitude — or, even two orders of magnitude — better resolution of what is being “observed” by our current technologies, would you still look back on the confidence you have today in the same way?] Why do you trust it that much (so much/so little)?

How do you factor your confidence or lack of confidence regarding these observational platforms into your daily work as a weather scientist? Does it matter? Do you think about this ever? When would you worry about this?

Role of the Public in Weather Science

Who do you think uses the forecasts, tracking information, and/or models that you and your colleagues at the NWS produce? [IF THEY DON'T DISTINGUISH: Is there something different about “the public” and your “core partners” (like EMs) in this regard?]

What does the average American — and, I am NOT talking about weather enthusiasts or “weather weenies” —, in your view, understand about weather science?

What do they understand about what YOU do? How do people respond to the information you provide?

How important is it whether or not they understand what you do? How important is it to understand forecasts? How important is it to understand models?

Do you feel like the overall efficacy, relevance, and importance of your work is diminished if regular, lay people don't understand what you do? [Follow-up depending upon response to initial question: If so, why? If not, why not?] How do you gauge their response? Do you adjust the way you present information to the public or consumers? How?

I've asked you a bunch of questions about "the average American" (whatever that means!). How are your core partners — your EMs, for instance — different (or similar) to what you described about the average American's understandings of weather? Do you feel like the overall efficacy, relevance, and importance of your work is diminished if your Emergency Managers or other core partners don't understand what you do? [*Follow-up depending upon response to initial question: If so, why? If not, why not?*]

Social Media

Do you *personally* use forms of social media? (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

[If *no*] Why not?

[If *yes*] What do you use? How do you use it? Who is in your social network? Do you receive Twitter postings related to the weather or from weather/atmospheric science feeds?

Who uses social media? What, in your understanding, do people use social media for? Do they use different platforms for different things?

How reliable is social media to tell us things about the world/to paint an accurate picture of the world? Why?