

Central Region Multimedia Weather Briefing

Product Description Document (PDD)

National Weather Service, Central Region

Part I – Mission Connection

1) Product Description – The Multimedia Weather Briefing (MWB) is an event-driven, Internet-accessible multimedia file that provides information concerning hazardous weather events within the service area of a Central Region office. The MWB offers a combined visual/auditory platform for supporting the planning activities of emergency response partners and other key customers, as well as the general public, by conveying expected timing, location, reasoning and impacts associated with upcoming hazardous weather events, impending or current drought conditions, climate and hydrologic outlooks, etc.

A forecaster, hydro-meteorological technician, meteorologist intern, hydrologist or member of the management team may perform the task of producing this briefing. It is available on the Internet as frequently as staffing and need dictate. Prior to and during high impact events, the frequency of briefings may increase in order to adequately address the risks posed to users.

2) Purpose -The purpose of the Multimedia Weather Briefing is to serve as a decision assistance tool that can be used by emergency managers, first responders and other key decision makers. Other interested audiences may include media partners, local and state officials, law enforcement, school superintendents, spotters, and the general public. The briefing provides information concerning the specific location, timing and expected magnitude of impacts which may affect these entities.

The briefings also serve as a means of conveying probabilities and other uncertainty information, which can be utilized in risk reduction assessments that may impact preparations or actions made by our partners and customers. Preparedness information can also be communicated through the briefings, depending on the type of hazardous weather.

3) Audience – The target audience encompasses all partners and customers of Central Region offices with Internet access and multimedia playback capability. The product is available to anyone who has an Internet connection.

4) Presentation Format – The user accesses the MWB by selecting the labeled hypertext link or by typing in the appropriate URL from the office’s web site. Offices will make

every reasonable effort to provide files that satisfy the most common media formats (see Part II).

5) Feedback Method – Feedback will typically be collected via comments provided to the local office webmaster. Opportunities for face-to-face responses will occasionally occur in the context of emergency management meetings, media workshops, public outreach events, etc.

Part II – Technical Description

1) Format & Science Basis – A wide variety of file formats may be used for rendering the Multimedia Weather Briefing, including (but not limited to) Windows Media Video (*.wmv), Real Media (*.ram), QuickTime (*.mov), MPEG Moving Picture Expert Group, (*.mpg, *.mpeg) and Macromedia Flash (*.swf) compression standards. The format must be able to accommodate both audio and video. The files are stored on a regional web server that distributes files to users via Hyper Text Transfer Protocol (HTTP). Users can access the videos via a determined URL on the office’s web page served via the Internet. The file format must also be such that users can access the Multimedia Weather Briefing through any web browser (Internet Explorer, Fire Fox, Safari, etc.) on any operating system (Windows XP, Linux, Unix, Mac, etc.)

The files can be produced using a variety of multimedia recording and editing software sources. Camtasia is the preferred software; however, other software packages such as Articulate, may be utilized to produce the audio and video files. The video programs used should be robust enough to create video files at many different levels of compression and file formats. In keeping with regional and national IT objectives, preservation of bandwidth requirements in the creation of multimedia content is vital. Ideally, video play time will be 2-3 minutes, and should not exceed 4 minutes.

The videos are completed as needed, on an event-driven basis, and uploaded to the Central Region web server. After upload, the file is available for viewing by partners and customers.

2) Availability – The product is available for download via hyperlink on the office’s website located on Central Region web servers. When the play button is selected, the embedded briefing will stream for viewing. The format of the Multimedia Weather Briefing should also be globally accessible, independent of the web browser or operating system used by the intended audience.

Alternate or embedded text and an audio clip of the Multimedia Weather Briefing will be available on the same web page as an alternate to the briefing. The text summary will describe the content in each slide, and highlight the main ideas given in the briefing. A

copy of the audio from the briefing will also be made available as a separate audio file (*.mp3). The text summary and audio file are designed to meet the needs of users with disabilities, and fulfill 508 compliancy requirements.

The product is updated as needed and appropriate for decision support, provided available personnel are not required for higher priority duties such as warning operations. When the product is available, it will be accessible via web page headline hyperlink, or directly viewable by typing the standard nomenclature below into your browser:

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/xxx/?n=webbriefing>

where “xxx” is the three-letter WFO identifier.

A map showing all CR WFOs is available on-line at”

http://www.weather.gov/os/notification/resources/cr_wfos.pdf

An example of the Multimedia Weather Briefing can be found at:

<http://www.crh.noaa.gov/mkx/?n=webbriefing-example>

3) Additional Information – The National Weather Service is considering a national implementation of this capability. This product has been designed to integrate with that implementation with nominal change. However, the eventual MWB production methods, software, and output may differ when formal implementation is completed.

For further information, please contact:

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