



As Dangerous February Storms Showed, Weather Can Wreak Havoc for Business – Anywhere, at Any Time

Do You Have a Trusted Weather Partner to Help You Make Emergency Decisions When Seconds Matter?

With multiple tornado outbreaks, blizzards and high winds sweeping across the U.S., weather is no longer thought of as a regional problem limited to a particular season or location. Businesses are reminded to build continuity and emergency plans that can monitor multiple locations at one time for a variety of weather risks.

All weather is local, right? Well, yes, kind of. Weather is often thought to be a hyperlocal issue impacting what is affecting a person, business, or organization and their immediate surroundings. For executives and management teams, however, especially at growing national or multi-national businesses with multiple offices or locations, “local weather” must be considered much more broadly.

Thousands of U.S. companies have large and expanding footprints and need a trusted weather partner to help them develop a tailored plan for severe weather, customized to their unique needs, and then monitor weather conditions at each site simultaneously. Safety teams and business leaders have a “duty of care” to make sure their teams are protected during weather emergencies. This ensures the safety of their people and the continuity of operations without interruption.

On top of bearing responsibility for multiple sites, threatening, disruptive weather can spin up suddenly, out of season and in locations that have never seen a catastrophic weather event after decades of doing business. AccuWeather, the world’s leading provider of the most accurate weather forecasts and warnings, caution businesses and organizations not to assume

that weather is not a threat just because it is an unusual risk for a certain season or location. The week of February 18, 2019 underscored this important message.

The southwestern U.S. experienced historic snowfall with over 2 feet of snow in Flagstaff, Arizona. Blizzard conditions plummeted the Plains and Upper Midwest, shutting down complex transportation infrastructure in the country’s heartland - the delivery lifeline for goods from east to west. High winds with gusts up to 60 mph blew through the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes, resulting in major power outages, some lasting multiple days. While these unusual wintry conditions plagued the southwest, even more dangerous, a regional tornado outbreak ripped through the southeastern U.S., including an EF-3 tornado that slammed Columbus, Mississippi. This storm killed 1 person, injured 11 and damaged over 500 homes and businesses.

WEATHER’S HOLISTIC EFFECT

Business continuity and logistics plans face a big challenge - the ability to simultaneously and efficiently watch the weather at multiple locations and thoroughly understand the big picture effect weather has on each one.

In Columbus, a large manufacturing AccuWeather Enterprise Solutions (AES) client was recently affected by the tornado event described above, striking only miles away. On top of the challenge of knowing how far away storms are and in what direction they are moving to ensure the safety of its people, the plant had other concerns as well in order to decide if sheltering

is needed. Shutting down manufacturing operations has costly consequences – up to hundreds of thousands of dollars - if not thought out properly.

For this facility, AccuWeather's expert meteorologists were watching weather threats for this specific location. They issued an AccuWeather SkyGuard® tornado warning to the facility, giving it 20 minutes of advanced warning before the tornado touched down nearby, allowing the manufacturing plant time to activate emergency plans with no casualties and no interruption of operations. Had it relied solely on public warnings from the government, it would have been alerted to the impending storm 3 minutes after the tornado was already on the ground causing destruction.

Depending solely on government warnings, can expose a business to unnecessary risk and liability. In this instance, publicly available warnings could have resulted in spilled materials, causing a hazardous materials situation, equipment damage from a rushed, improper shutdown and a panic among employees when they learned the tornado is already on the ground near the facility.

By contrast, AccuWeather's pinpointed hyperlocal warning in Columbus - with 20 minutes of advanced warning - enabled the manufacturer's decision makers to enact their predetermined severe weather action plan. The plan was developed in partnership with AccuWeather to meet its specific needs and allowed them to make early, critical decisions to get shut down operations and get people sheltered safely and efficiently without the chaos associated with hastened emergency evacuations.

AccuWeather SkyGuard® severe weather warnings serve as the activation for emergency plans. When the warning comes across, the threat is close, and it's going to be dangerous. SkyGuard® clients can also interact directly with our meteorologists 24x7x365 so a company's staff can make the best decisions.

SKYGUARD® PAINTS THE BIG PICTURE

But in this case, it wasn't just about that one southern location that shutdown because of the tornado. Many other locations across the country were experiencing high wind gusts and blizzard conditions.

SkyGuard® Severe Weather Warnings and Storm Potential Outlooks and Notices can proactively paint the full picture for companies and provide more advanced warning than by simply repackaging broad public warnings. They raise awareness and highlight the potential for severe weather outbreaks, including

tornadoes, days in advance. Corporate command centers and enterprise business continuity teams use these tools when building business continuity and emergency plans and making staff decisions.

- During Flagstaff's record snowfall on February 21, AES provided 96 hours of advanced notice, giving nearby clients an additional 48 hours to prepare and act compared to warnings from public sources.
- Northeast AES clients facing high winds, were given 48 hours of advanced notice for the severe weather and provided an additional 24 hours of notice compared to public sources.
- AES clients in the Plains and Upper Midwest received 96 hours of advanced notice of blizzard conditions with an additional 72 hours of advanced warning compared to public sources.
- Tornadoes that struck the southeastern U.S. on March 3 killed 23 people; AccuWeather clients in Cairo, Georgia received 37 minutes of advanced notice as compared to 6 minutes from government warnings.
- AccuWeather clients in Gadsden County, Florida received 20 minutes of advanced notice. By contrast, government warnings were not issued until a full 2 minutes after a tornado touched down that same day.

Working with a trusted weather partner, such as AccuWeather, is an important part of business continuity and emergency management plans. Receiving the best weather insights helps your business and organization:

- AccuWeather helps businesses develop a custom plan that meets their unique needs
- AccuWeather warnings communicate early and clearly in plain language so there is no confusion or ambiguity
- AccuWeather is your partner to provide you with the confidence of knowing when to act to protect people, property and profits

Interested in learning more about this year's active spring severe weather forecast? AccuWeather Enterprise Solutions is hosting a webinar on Tuesday, March 26th, at 11:00am ET/10:00am CT where expert meteorologists will tell you how this year's spring severe weather could affect your business and what you can do about it. [Register now.](#)

Image Credit: US National Weather Service Jackson Mississippi Facebook. February 24th, 2019.



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