



SKYWARN for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: An Example of Participation in Local Advocacy and Focus Groups to Provide Specialized Services to Underserved Communities

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Did you know???

Gallaudet University estimates that 14% of the population of the United States suffers from some form of hearing loss.

Background

A local outreach and education group called Hearing Bridges reached out to WFO Nashville to participate in a committee called E.A.R.S. (Emergency Alert and Readiness Services) and requested a fully accessible Spotter talk for the Deaf and hard of hearing (captioning and interpreting services provided). After successfully hosting such a training, it became apparent that this underserved community could benefit from further training and expansion to other geographical areas.



Tennessee



Thom Roberts, a founding member of the EARS committee, hands a NOAA Weather Radio with strobe light and pillow shaker attachments to a deaf individual. All participating households received a radio with such attachments.

Weather Radio Symposium

On September 21st, 2013, NWS Nashville, as a contributing member of E.A.R.S., hosted a half-day SKY-WARN workshop for the Deaf. This included spotter training, general preparedness training, awareness and preparedness handout materials, and even free NOAA Weather Radios for all attending deaf households. This made possible by partnership with the Metro Nashville Public Health Department. Over 100 households (150+ people) were in attendance.



NWS Nashville Meteorologist Trevor Boucher leads a SKY-WARN Spotter Training for Deaf and hard of hearing participants. ASL interpreters and captioning services were used.

Alabama



NWS Huntsville Meteorologist Jennifer Schuller leads a SKYWARN Training for the Deaf and hard of hearing with the aid of interpreting and captioning courtesy of the Alabama Dept. of Rehab Services.

Kansas



NWS Wichita Meteorologist-in-charge Suzanne Fortin (left center) answers a question from a deaf individual (center) with the aid of an ASL interpreter (left) at the KS Assoc. for the Deaf Conference in Olathe, KS.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Outreach Team (DaHHOT)

- A group of NWS meteorologists from multiple offices across the country with a unified goal of serving the Deaf and hard of hearing populations within their county warning areas.
- Quarterly teleconferences are held with participating members to share experiences and challenges working with this demographic.
- Current projects include a national informational webpage (see QR code below) designed for those with hearing loss, aiding with partner organizations with common goals, and spreading Deaf awareness within the NWS.
- Grassroots efforts have begun in TN, AL, KS, CO, and more!

