

# Symposium tries to address changing weather patterns

By KRISTEN KELLEHER  
Cape May Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY – Frank Donato, Ocean City Office of Emergency Management director, opened the Cape-Atlantic Severe Weather Conference on Thursday, Sept. 15, by listing a multitude of storms affecting the area in the last several years.

There were several nor'easters in 2009, as well as a December blizzard, which caused many in Wildwood to lose power for days. The next year included multiple blizzards, torrential rain, and Hurricane Earl, which Donato said was a near-miss for the area.

In 2011, there was Hurricane Irene, an earthquake and a microburst thunderstorm; in 2012, there was the Derecho and Superstorm Sandy.

In 2013, there was a winter nor'easter. In January, there was Winter Storm Jonas.

Before 2009, the last Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster declared event was a President's Day blizzard in 2003.

From 2009 on, there have been five FEMA declared events, he said.

Donato moderated the two-hour long conference, which allowed the public to ask questions to weather and emergency management officials on the Ocean City Music Pier.

Panelists included: Kathy Orr, Fox 29 News Philadelphia meteorologist; Dan Skeldon, Press of Atlantic City and Longport Media meteorologist; Joe Miketta, National Weather Service in Mount Holly meteorologist; Jim Eberwine, retired National Weather Service meteorologist; Jonathan Carr, founder/forecaster of Weather NJ Facebook and Twitter pages; Martin Pagliughi, Cape May County Emergency Management director; Vince Jones, Atlantic County Emergency Management director; and Vince Maione, Atlantic City Electric region president.

Throughout the conference, several people asked questions about these weather-related changes, including weather patterns, polar ice caps melting, climate change, and more.



Kristen Kelleher/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE  
Fox 29 meteorologist Kathy Orr at the weather symposium at the Ocean City Music Pier. She and a panel of other weather experts answered audience questions.

In the first question, an audience member asked whether or not this severe weather is expected to

man.

When the Earth warms, it results in a charged atmosphere, warmer water temperatures, and heavier rains.

"Any event we've been seeing the past 10, 15 years, is more supercharged ... I do think we're going to keep seeing that pattern," Orr said.

Eberwine said they are seeing more heavy rain events.

As an example, he cited a "non-descript little disturbance in the northeast Gulf of Mexico."

The tropical depression, or cluster of thunderstorms, drifted across the Gulf of Mexico, where the water temperature is 90 degrees, to Louisiana a few weeks ago, he said.

Louisiana received 31 inches of rain as a result. The cost of the disaster was \$8.8 billion, he said.

"The cycle is now kind of mixed up," Eberwine said. "You can't say there's a 10-, 20-, 30-year cycle anymore. You're just going to have to deal with some of these as they come."

While rain has gotten heavier, some severe weather has become less

frequent.

Eberwine said tornadoes have dropped in intensity and frequency in the last six to seven years.

Water temperatures this year were also at a record high in Atlantic City, Eberwine said.

Records go back to 1912. Weather agencies are attempting to respond to some of these changes.

According to Miketta, the National Weather Service raised the threshold they use to issue coastal flood advisories and coastal flood warnings because of how frequently flooding has occurred in the last several years.

"We used to have a nor'easter every two or three years. Now we're getting two or three a year," Miketta said.

When asked about polar ice caps melting and the impact on local weather, Miketta said National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) studies indicated sea levels are rising, but not solely because of melting polar ice caps.

"We don't know what the causes are, but we can see some of the data," he said.

# Experts urge shore residents to heed storm warnings

By KRISTEN KELLEHER  
Cape May Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY — As weather patterns become less predictable, preparedness, both among the public and weather professionals, is increasingly important.

During the Cape-Atlantic Severe Weather Confer-

ence, members of the public asked meteorologists and emergency management officials how to know when to evacuate, and how to know which storm is one to watch out for.

While there are no easy answers as to which storm will deal a devastating blow, the conference's panelists urged the public

not to become complacent when it comes to storms.

"Unfortunately, it's human nature to always think the next storm is going to be like the last storm," said Dan Skeldon, Press of Atlantic City and Longport Media meteorologist.

As history has proven, they aren't.

Hurricane Irene largely missed Cape May County. One year later, Superstorm Sandy caused serious damage to the region.

Panelists worried about the impact of Hermine, a post-tropical cyclone that was expected to impact southern New Jersey during Labor Day weekend, will have on the next weather event.

"Hermine, that was a big scare. Nothing happened, so these guys are going to have a very difficult job ahead of them next time," Skeldon said.

"Meteorologists are only



Kristen Kelleher/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE  
Cape May County Emergency Management Director Martin Pagliughi said constant communication with the public is a priority during a weather emergency.

as good as their last forecast," he said.

Carr said he feared complacency could be Hermine's most dangerous effect.

Skeldon also said that, unfortunately, national media can "blow up every single storm."

This can lead to public confusion.

He also said there is too much focus on labeling storms, such as categorizing them as subtropical or post-tropical, and not enough focus on a storm's potential impact.

"A tropical storm is 70 miles per hour. People don't take it seriously. A hurricane is 74 miles per hour. People do take it seriously," Skeldon said.

According to Atlantic County Emergency Management Director Vince Jones, however, the public should also "take some

ownership" over the decision to prepare for and evacuate a storm.

Part of this, according to Jones, is making a game plan. As an example of unpreparedness, he said people came to a county shelter during a storm without bringing their medication. Some could not articulate what medication they were taking.

"You have to look at what you do day in and day out and be ready to replicate that," Jones said.

The public also needs to be ready to leave at moment's notice, he said.

On Hermine, Jones said two concerts scheduled to be held on Atlantic City's beaches were cancelled for safety reasons.

He said people have a tendency to want to run towards the water and see how high the waves are. Jones said he wanted to

make sure no one was injured and they would have put emergency responders at risk pulling people out of the water.

Before a weather event, Cape May County Emergency Management Director Martin Pagliughi said the county prepares by being in constant contact with the National Hurricane Center, local weather centers, and with local meteorologists to determine what the impact could be.

The time of the year also plays a roll in what they need to prepare for.

In August, Pagliughi said they know they have 700,000 tourists in the county without knowledge of coastal flooding.

In winter storms, the biggest problem is the potential for massive power outages and he said they are in constant contact with Atlantic City Electric during a winter storm. If there are areas that will be without power for more than a day or a day-and-a-half, they have to open a shelter, he said.

"You're constantly looking ahead to see what the plan is going to be," he said.

According to Vince Maione, Atlantic City Electric region president, trimming trees in advance is the best way to eliminate power outages.

"The problem is, most people love their trees," he said.

He said an additional 30 percent in funding was approved for Atlantic City Electric to dedicate to tree trimming. He said they trim throughout southern New Jersey and concentrate on areas most in need of trimming.

According to Pagliughi, constant communication with the public is also a priority during a weather emergency, whether through the county's website, reverse 911 notification systems, and more.

In Ocean City, there are sirens which sound during a hurricane, Ocean City Office of Emergency Management Director Frank Donato said.

Skeldon said cell phone companies automatically enroll customers in warning alerts for tornados and flash floods.

While history can repeat itself, panelists stressed the public not look to the most recent storm when guiding a decision about how to prepare.

"Every storm is different. That's the problem," Pagliughi said.

## TIDES : September-October 2016

DATE	HIGH		LOW	
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
28	6:59	7:14	12:36	12:45
29	7:41	7:54	1:18	1:30
30	8:19	8:32	1:57	2:12
1	8:56	9:09	2:34	2:52
2	9:31	9:45	3:08	3:31
3	10:06	10:20	3:42	4:10
4	10:42	10:57	4:14	4:49
5	11:19	11:35	4:47	5:30

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