

This is Troy Nicolini with the National Weather Service with today's community comment.

Today I wanted to share a little bit about what your local National Weather Service office does to ensure that we are always here for you. And just to be clear, in case you didn't know, we are a federal agency and we are here for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Before I explain what we do to make sure we are always here for you, let me explain why we take being here so seriously.

First of all, we need to be operational 24/7 in case some weather or tsunami emergency happens out of the blue. Things like dam failures, earthquake and tsunamis, and the unexpected escalation of any number of other weather events are the most common reasons why we might need to spring into action at 2:00 in the morning. But also remember that we play a key emergency response role in any kind of natural or man-made disaster that might happen. For example, we are the primary entry point in the Emergency Alert System for all other agencies in the area. So even if there was something so completely non-weather related as a chlorine spill on a local highway, then we are the folks who would interrupt your TVs and radios, like the one you are listening to right now, to share critical lifesaving information on behalf of law enforcement and fire agencies. But let me get back to what we do to ensure that we are always here.

Like fire departments, police departments, and ERs, we have staff who work rotating shifts so that at least two people are always here. We also have an extra strong building that is designed to withstand Tornado force winds, and we have an incredible back up generator to ensure we have electricity if there is a power outage. We even have a really cool system called an uninterruptible power system that uses batteries to keep our computers going between the time when the power goes out and the generator automatically starts. So we never get unexpected reboots. And if that wasn't enough, we have neighboring offices in Medford, Monterey, and Sacramento who can back us up completely with just three clicks of a mouse. So if your local Eureka office were to somehow not be able to function then any of those offices can create a virtual version of our office so that our staff could go to there and continue to serve the Northcoast. But what about during a government shutdown, you might ask.

As emergency personnel we work through government shutdowns, without interruption. We do have some constraints on what we can do though. Basically, we can only perform our emergency and lifesaving work. So, for example, if a school was scheduled to come to our office for a tour – we would have to cancel that tour during a shut down. Also, I would not be allowed to record a Community Comment like this one. Fortunately, I recorded this one on Friday, December 21 ☺

This has been Troy Nicolini with today's community comment.