

Meeting minutes from October 6th, 1999

NWA Central Iowa Chapter

This meeting was held at the National Weather Service office in Johnston. Andy Kula and Chuck Myers gave us a demonstration of the NWS's new AWIPS stations. They showed us everything from the HP UNIX workstations, to the backroom processing, to the satellite receivers.

The NWS now has a lot more information at its disposal. One of the biggest advantages is the ease of getting to the information. The forecasters no longer need to jump between different stations; all the information is available at each station. The NWS forecast office has gone from looking 70 s retro, to making the even the well-funded commercial forecasters wish they had that much information.

According to Andy Kula, the Fort Dodge weather radio station could actually start being tested as soon as this month. That will fill a huge whole in radio coverage. While the final responsibility for taking cover rests with the individual, it looks like a lot more of them will be able to make a timely and informed decision. This is important as more land is populated, increasing the chance that a tornado will strike houses and businesses.

Andy Kula gave an overview of this summer's Windfest. It looked like a huge success. There were lots of kids and other people learning about weather and alternative energy. One of the reasons wind-power is becoming more popular is cheaper electronics, and the availability of lightweight composite wind blades. The scale of the wind generating towers is a bit hard to grasp. The generator itself looks like a small submarine on the ground, but 190 feet in the air it looks like a white dot that is dwarfed by the blades of the propeller.

One of the most popular exhibits at Windfest was a tornado machine that was made by the Iowa State students. A hot plate, some fans, and a little smoke produced a tornado that seemed to hypnotize the kids there.

Chuck gave an update on the 800 MHz radio project. This will provide backup communications between the NWS, TV Stations, and emergency management in the case of a phone outage like what occurred on June 29, 1998. The current holdup was a memo of understanding that the NWS sent to the TV stations in August. Only WOI had returned the memo. Brian from TV-8 said he'd follow up with their station, and Metinka was going to follow up with WOI.

Paul, as secretary, said we would actually try to start getting the meeting minutes typed up. Chuck said we'd start trying to have regularly scheduled meetings. The first Wednesday of Sept, Nov, Jan, Mar, and May. Social hour is 6:30 pm until 7 pm. Then the meeting starts at 7 pm. Hopefully this will allow the evening weather people a chance to arrive.

Next, the NWA had officer elections. All incumbents were re-elected.

President: Chuck Myers

VP: Andy Kula

Treasurer: Metinka Slater

Secretary: Paul V. Craven

We have about \$32,000 in the bank. We talked weather projects to fund with some of this money. These are listed below.

1. The 800 MHz radio project, described above.

2. Grants to high schools were very popular before. The high schools really need the money. There are 181 high schools in the state of Iowa according to Terry Garrett. We are looking at doing five \$750 grants. We'd publicize it by getting stations to donate air time, and by sending e-mail to schools. We still need someone to head up this project before it can move forward.

3. Instrumenting the Alleman Towers. John McLaughlin made a proposal for this last year, but the NWA did not move forward with it. This year, with more money, we are looking at it again. Paul Craven agreed to head up this project. In short, weather instruments would be placed along a 2,000 foot tower, and the information would be made available on the internet.

4. Putting a Boltek lighting detector up on a government building and display the information on the web. This idea came from Robert Goldhammer, but he wasn't able to come to this meeting.

5. Send a member to the National NWA conference. This would be a reward to someone who gave a lot of time to the local NWA chapter, and also get some ideas about how to run our NWA conference.

6. Buy a laptop computer to help out with the registration desk during the conference.

Next, we talked about the 2000 local NWA conference. Last year we had about 385 people attend. The conference was actually put on by only a handful of NWA members. Those people are not willing to do all the work again. So Chuck came up with the idea of teams responsible for parts of the conference.

Registration team: Brain Karstens and the ISU AMS chapter.

Promotion team: No volunteers. It was hoped WHO people would help with this.

Hotel team: Terry Garrett will help with this team, although we need someone to head it up.

Agenda team: Brian Karris and other KCCI people, Karl Jungbluth, and Andy Kula.