

Statement of Interest – WASIS 2009

MICHAEL MORITZ

5413 Randolph Circle • Hastings, Nebraska 68901

Michael.Moritz@noaa.gov • 402-461-4438 • work 402-462-2127

Who are “**they**”?

As a meteorologist, I hear the word “they” all the time. “*They*” say it’s going to rain. “*They*” gave us no warning. And the classic, “*they*” have the only job in the world you can be wrong, and *still* get paid.

In my 15+ years with the National Weather Service, I have been afforded the opportunity to show our customers just who “they” is. In a personal sense, “*they*” is me; the meteorologist trying diligently to forecast the high temperature on the nose. Or the meteorologist who spends hours tracking storms, issues timely warnings, but can only watch helplessly as lives are forever changed. Yet, through engaging everyone from politicians to preschoolers, I have come to realize “*they*” isn’t just me, it’s really “***all of us.***”

Living and working in a relatively rural area, gives me the somewhat unique chance to engage the people who use the forecasts daily, mostly through direct oral or written communication. During my career, I have grown to understand I cannot just be a good forecaster; I have to actively engage our customers and partners in an understanding of the forecast process. I have learned people depend upon the forecast to improve their lives (financially, socially, etc). The users of weather information have a direct stake in the forecast. They want to be part of the team. They *are* part of the team. Successful teams take ownership in their cause as a group. For our team to be successful, knowing what each team member thinks, desires, understands, and how each member reacts to weather information is vital. As meteorologists, if we don’t understand what our users want or do with the information we provide, our opportunity to make a substantial difference is lost. That opportunity will be opened further by engaging all our team members in the process of understanding weather, its societal impact, and possibly most important, the weather’s personal impact on them.

So, whether you are a meteorologist or not, the next time you hear on the radio “they say snow is coming”, think about that statement for a second. It may be more than just loose use of a personal pronoun.