

Kristin Scotten
Statement of Interest – Summer 2009 WAS*IS Workshop

Like most meteorologists, I have been obsessed with the weather from an early age. While most weather enthusiasts build on excitement during severe weather, I have thrived on fear. I am absolutely terrified of tornadoes! Even though I cannot pinpoint one severe weather event that made me scared when I was a child, my fear has stayed with me to this day. By trying to conquer my fear and earning a meteorology degree, I definitely gained a better perspective on tornadoes, learning when and how they develop, and how to prepare for them. I feel that my fear, which is very common with the public, allows me to better understand our customers' needs during a severe weather event.

Since working in the National Weather Service almost seven years, I have discovered that we, as meteorologists, do a fine job understanding how and why significant weather events occur using past history and research. However, sometimes there seems to be a disconnect with public perception on how we, as meteorologists, relay information and communicate to the customer. One of the hardest things I have learned as a forecaster is how your customers hang on every word in your product. Something as small as removing the word "isolated" from the phrase "isolated tornadoes" can drastically change how the public anticipates severe weather.

I first learned about WAS*IS during the Super Tuesday Tornado Outbreak Service Assessment during February 2008. The program intrigued me, since I was directly in the path of the Southeast Memphis EF2 tornado on February 5th, 2008. Luckily, the tornado lifted about three miles to my southwest. While this tornado was occurring, I was not a meteorologist, but a member of the public, vulnerable to the death and destruction of a large tornado. Many thoughts crossed my mind as I took cover for nearly twenty minutes, which seemed like an eternity. I wondered about the decision-making process a person goes through when a Tornado Warning is issued. On that day, the NWS Memphis forecast area tragically had nine fatalities, some of which could have been prevented by better decision-making. One of my short term career goals is to become a Warning Coordination Meteorologist so I can help increase severe weather safety and educate people to make the best decision possible during life-threatening weather.

The opportunity to participate in the Summer 2009 WAS*IS Workshop would allow me to gain a better perspective of the social science of meteorology, learn and discuss how to get people more involved in taking action during significant weather events, and share this information with others within and outside our profession. The ultimate goal is to better serve the customer and understand what they need. It is our duty as a profession to keep up with technological advances in order to continue to provide the best service possible through improved communications. Sometimes, we meteorologists lose sight on who we are actually serving. We need to remember and understand that our actions directly influence the public's decision making process.

Thank you for considering my application for the Summer 2009 WAS*IS Workshop.