

# *Weather Websites*

There are many different websites available to use for obtaining weather information in an emergency situation. The National Weather Service (NWS), local news media, universities, and private companies provide a variety of websites to obtain weather information. Many weather websites often provide current weather maps to look at current conditions in and around your area, in addition to extended forecasts, fire outlooks, UV index outlooks, and other environmental pieces of information. While other websites show computer weather models, forecasting charts, and other more technical pieces of information used by meteorologists and weather enthusiasts to make forecasts and do research on the weather.

However, some websites have key advantages and disadvantages in their use, particularly for those that have make important decisions about the safety of themselves and others. The purpose of this activity is to look at a variety of different weather websites and determine which websites should be used by your school if a weather emergency arises.

## Website #1: The National Weather Service

1. Go to [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).
2. In the “Local forecast by city, st or zip code” box, type in the zip code for your school, as provided by your teacher and click “go”.
3. On this page, you should find a forecast for the week, local watches/warnings, general statements about the area’s weather situation, current conditions and (if near a major body of water) coastal advisories for surf, surge, and boating conditions.
4. Scroll down and click on the “hourly weather graph”.
5. The hourly weather graph page allows you to look at different forecasted weather parameters, such as temperature, dew point, and severe weather potential. While this wouldn’t necessarily be useful in an emergency, it would be useful in seeing if the potential for a weather emergency situation exists. It would also be useful in looking rain, fog, and ice potential, which could impact outdoor class activities, athletics, physical education classes, and dismissal.
6. Go back to the local forecast page for your school/town.
7. Scroll to the box that says “Additional Forecasts and Information” and click through the links available such as Forecast Discussion and Zone Forecast Product.
8. Answer the following questions.
  - a. How easy is the site to navigate? Do you think your principal or a teacher would be able to quickly find information on hazardous weather? Is there a good variety of information?



b. What are some positive attributes about the page?

c. What are some negative attributes about the page?

### Website #2: Local News Media Stations

1. Using the list provided by your teacher, select one news station website for your market area. (Station Name: \_\_\_\_\_)
2. Once on the station's homepage, click on weather. This may require some searching on the station's homepage.
3. Explore the station's weather page. Clicking on the variety of links, videos, graphics, forecasts, etc.
4. Do the same for one other station (Station Name: \_\_\_\_\_)
5. Answer the following questions.
  - a. Which of the two station websites, did you think was easier to use or a better website in general?
  - b. For the station website you answered in a, did you find this site easy to use? Do you think your principal or a teacher could find weather information quickly in an emergency?
  - c. What are some positive attributes about the page you answered in a?
  - d. What are some negative attributes about the page you answered in a?



Website #3: Other weather websites

1. On a search engine (such as google or bing), search weather. Then, click on any of the links provided. Your options may include The Weather Channel, AccuWeather, Weather Underground, and WeatherBug. Your teacher may also provide a list of websites as well.
2. Once on the site's homepage, search for your location.
3. Click around the site and explore what the site has available to use.
4. Repeat this process for multiple sites.
5. Answer the following questions.
  - a. What websites did you explore?

b. How easy were the sites to navigate?

c. What were some positive attributes about the sites?

d. What were some negative attributes about the sites?



Now, think back to hazardous weather situations. In hazardous weather situations, it is important that decision makers have easy access to weather information, so they can stay up to date on the situation and keep students and staff safe. If you had to pick two of the websites for your school's decision makers to use, which would they be? Why?

