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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

JOHN KEAST, STAFF DIRECTOR  
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May 11, 2020

Dr. Neil Jacobs  
Acting Administrator  
National Oceanic and  
Atmospheric Administration  
1325 East-West Hwy  
Silver Spring, MD 20910


Dear Acting Administrator Jacobs:

As Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, I request that you provide a detailed accounting of your plans for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to communicate hazardous weather information during the COVID-19 pandemic. With flooding and tornadoes impacting the Midwest and Southern states over the last few weeks, we have seen firsthand the challenges of managing natural disaster preparedness and response amid this pandemic. Government agencies at the local, state, and federal levels are already stretched thin as they work to control the spread of the virus. In addition, there can be conflict in the guidelines for handling the risks of a pandemic and a natural disaster, with the former instructing people to stay in their homes and the latter often directing displaced persons to evacuation shelters.

Faced with these obstacles, it is critical that NOAA continue to work with federal agencies, such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Federal Emergency Management Agency, state and local governments, and social scientists to develop a plan for weighing the risks of multiple hazards and communicating unified actionable messages. The public should not be confused about how to respond. I have been pleased to see state National Weather Services offices already adapting their messaging to complement COVID-19 efforts and expect that this effort will continue at the regional and national levels.

These challenges will persist as we approach hurricane season, so it is critical we act now, learn from our successes and failures thus far, and ensure we are prepared to assist the public as we respond to multiple hazards.

Sincerely,

  
Roger Wicker  
Chairman