UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20230

September 15, 2025

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
U.S. House of Representatives
2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Thank you for your letters dated August 27, July 24, July 11, July 8, and May 20 concerning the staffing and capabilities at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS). We appreciate your outreach regarding the tragic events of the catastrophic flooding that occurred over portions of the Texas Hill Country into Central Texas on July 4, 2025.

The NWS provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters and ocean areas. The numerous instances of significant-to-catastrophic flooding along the Guadalupe River, and along the border area between San Antonio and Austin, Texas, resulted from heavy rainfall of 6-12", with isolated downpours of 15", that fell across the Guadalupe River basin in just 12 hours, much of this in the pre-dawn hours of July 4. Preliminary data indicates that nine river gauges exceeded major flood stage, and two gauges exceeded record flood stage.

NOAA's record of the flooding began on July 2, 2025, with the upgrading of the Weather Prediction Center's Excessive Rainfall Outlook from "Marginal Risk" to "Slight Risk." NWS Austin/San Antonio issued the first Considerable Flash Flood Warning at 1:14 am on July 4. This alert came 201 minutes before sheriff's offices reported flooding at low water crossings, reflecting a decision to issue an alert exceptionally early.

Between July 3 and July 4, NWS Weather Forecast Office (WFO) Austin/San Antonio issued 36 Flash Flood Warnings. Warnings with a "Considerable" tag triggered Wireless Emergency Alerts on enabled mobile devices and NOAA Weather Radio. Additionally, 18-20" of rain fell northwest of Austin, Texas early morning on July 5, 2025, prompting Flash Flood Emergencies for a separate, but significant, extreme rainfall event.

Regarding your concerns related to NWS staffing, the WFOs in Austin/San Antonio and San Angelo, Texas both had extra personnel on duty to support operations and timely delivery of alerts. Typically, NWS offices in the area would be staffed with one to two forecasters on duty overnight; however, NWS took proactive steps to significantly surge staffing to five personnel.

NWS collaborates with Federal, state, and local emergency and water management agencies, as well as other government bodies focused on public safety. The NWS WFOs in Austin/San Antonio and San Angelo, TX were able to successfully provide decision support services to local partners, including those in the emergency management community, during this disaster. The NWS cannot accomplish this goal alone and relies on a wide range of partners to effectively collect data, disseminate information, and ensure that communities are informed, prepared and resilient ahead of extreme weather events.

We appreciate the opportunity to partner with Congress as NOAA continues its work in support of its mission of protecting life and property.

Sincerely,

Will Turner
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs