



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

August 27, 2025

Secretary Howard Lutnick
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

Despite my repeated requests, I have not received a response from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) providing the requested NWSChat, call, and shift logs, radar archives, and relevant communications spanning from July 2 to July 5 from the National Weather Service (NWS) Austin/San Antonio forecasting office, in addition to answers to oversight questions. Almost two months have passed since devastating floods killed over 130 people in Central Texas. Texans still do not have a complete and accurate understanding of the NWS's actions before, during, and after the disaster.

Ken Graham, Director of the National Weather Service advised me on July 11 that the materials, which I am requesting, were "easy" to produce. I have been advised that answers to my inquiries have been prepared, but that these are being withheld by your office. Without a timely and complete response from NOAA, we cannot prepare for upcoming natural disasters. We have no evidence of the NWS's preparation, communication, and response—or lack thereof—related to the July 4 flood. The refusal to provide a complete, timely response, suggests the Administration has something to hide concerning its handling of this tragedy.

Plasse immediately release all NWS Chat logs, all call logs, all radar archives, and all shift logs, and all communications with the River Forecast Center from NWS Austin/San Antonio from July 2 to July 5. Central Texas families cannot be cast aside as you and the Trump Administration deny transparency concerning this catastrophe.

Sincerely,



Lloyd Doggett

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 24, 2025

Laura Grimm

Chief of Staff performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128

Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Under Secretary Grimm,

I have yet to receive a response to my attached July 11, 2025 request to you for critical records from the National Weather Service (NWS) Austin/San Antonio office relating to the July 4 Central Texas floods, in addition to a number of questions regarding warning coordination operations before and during the storm. To allow for effective oversight, provide these requested materials immediately.

When speaking with NWS Director Ken Graham on July 11, he informed me that the NWS Austin/San Antonio office contacted county emergency managers, before and during the flood to alert them of the incoming dangers. Calls were not made directly to camp managers, community leaders, or other public safety figures. Since this meeting, it has been reported that Kerr County Emergency Manager W.B. "Dub" Thomas was likely asleep and unresponsive to any calls from the NWS.¹ If Thomas was the NWS point of contact to alert Kerr County residents and visitors of the incoming flood, his unresponsiveness prevented the community from receiving the warning.

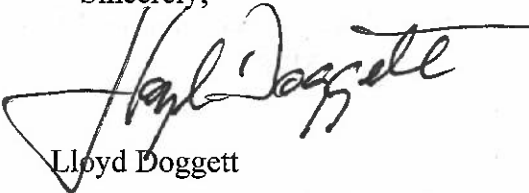
In light of this new reporting, it is all the more imperative that you provide the previously requested documents from July 2, 3, 4, and 5, including: (1) all NWSChat logs, (2) all call logs, (3) all radar archives, (4) all shift logs, and (5) any additional logs that include information shared with the River Forecast Center in Fort Worth from the NWS Austin/San Antonio office. While Director Graham indicated that these logs, especially the NWSChat and call logs, are easily available, I have received nothing from the NWS.

¹ Shimon Prokupecz, Matthew J. Friedman, and Rachel Clarke, "Texas county's emergency management coordinator was likely asleep in critical morning hours of deadly floods, sheriff says," *CNN*, July 23, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/23/us/texas-flood-state-inquiry-begins>

I want a complete understanding of what happened before and during the disaster since the NWS Austin/San Antonio office operates with critical understaffing and a vacant Warning Coordination Meteorologist.

In addition to the previously requested records, please also provide specific responses to the previous questions from the attached July 11 letter. I look forward to these answers and to your transferring the easily available logs to my office.

Sincerely,



Lloyd Doggett

CC:

Ken Graham

Director

National Weather Service

1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128

Washington, DC 20230

Pat Vesper

Meteorologist-in-Charge

US Department of Commerce

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Weather Service

Austin/San Antonio, TX

2090 Airport Road

New Braunfels, TX 78130

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 11, 2025

Laura Grimm

Chief of Staff performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Acting Under Secretary Grimm,

I appreciate National Weather Service (NWS) Director, Ken Graham, making himself available today via Zoom to answer questions I have raised in my letters to you. I have deep respect for the difficult work affecting every part of America that Director Graham and his staff must perform every day.

While Director Graham's answers were helpful, to get a complete response concerning what happened I need to review information that he indicated is easily available in electronic form for the Austin/San Antonio NWS office for July 2, 3, 4, and 5, 2025: (1) all chat logs, (2) all call logs, (3) all radar archives, and (4) all shift logs. Since there was no hydrologist present at that office during the critical July 3-4 time frame and the office was reliant largely on the River Forecast Center in Fort Worth, please include any additional logs that include information shared between these two offices. Please forward these logs to me now.

Given that the long-time Austin/San Antonio Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Paul Yura, yielded in April to the Administration call for NWS employees to accept retirement, my understanding is that NWS contacts about the flooding were limited to the State of Texas and to county emergency managers, and that no contacts were made directly to Camp Mystic or other private entities. Please advise whether my understanding is correct. Please advise if the level of contact between NWS Austin/San Antonio and local media officials was consistent with previous weather-related disasters, such as the 2015 Wimberley Memorial Day Flood.

While my most recent inquiry to you concerned Kerr County, we also had serious loss of life in Travis, Burnet, and Williamson Counties. Director Graham also agreed to determine whether the July 4 Travis County Flash Flood Watch was in fact allowed to expire at 7 pm with a gap in time before a Flash Flood Emergency was declared at 12:41 am on July 5.

Please provide an accounting of which models were used to inform the forecasts, warnings, and public language along with information from the radar. Specifically, was the High-Resolution Rapid Refresh (HRRR) model, which on July 3 suggested the possibility of as much as 20 inches of rainfall, included among these models?

Director Graham additionally informed me that the Warning Coordination Meteorologist role within the NWS Austin/San Antonio office is among the 126 permanent, mission-critical field positions that will be posted for candidates under an exception to the hiring freeze in the coming weeks. This role is critical, and I strongly urge NOAA and the Office of Personnel Management to work expeditiously to post and fill this role with a well-qualified candidate.

I look forward to your prompt answer to my several questions above, but most importantly to electronic transfer of the logs to my office by next week.

Sincerely,



Lloyd Doggett

CC:

Ken Graham

Director

National Weather Service

1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128

Washington, DC 20230

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2025

Laura Grimm

Chief of Staff performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Ms. Grimm,

Your lack of response to my attached May 20 request for information about the reduced capabilities of the National Weather Service (NWS) is all the more troubling given the tragic Central Texas flooding. News reports and public staff information pages indicate that the NWS Austin/San Antonio office has a 22% vacancy rate with six vacant roles, including a hydrologist who performs flood projects, two meteorologists -- including the Warning and Coordination Meteorologist, and a science officer. The NWS San Angelo office, which has jurisdiction over neighboring Hill Country counties, was reportedly missing a senior hydrologist, staff forecaster, and meteorologist-in-charge, operating with a 17% vacancy rate.¹ All of these positions are critical for timely, accurate forecasts and warnings, including working with local emergency managers on when and how to warn and, as necessary, to evacuate impacted residents.

As of now, at least 100 people² have been killed by flooding in Central Texas, among them 27 campers and counselors at Camp Mystic.³ Although the NWS issued a flash flood warning at 1:14 AM, after most of Kerr County was asleep, a repeat of this warning at 3:35am as Camp Mystic was being inundated, and a flash flood emergency at 4:03 AM,⁴ this catastrophe raises questions regarding what and when communications were sent to local disaster

¹ Christopher Flavelle, "As Floods Hit, Key Roles Were Vacant at Weather Service Offices in Texas," *New York Times*, July 5, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/05/us/politics/texas-floods-warnings-vacancies.html>

² Berenice Garcia, Jessica Shuran Yu, and Carlos Nogueras Ramos, "Central Texas flooding death toll rises to at least 90 as search continues for survivors," *Texas Tribune*, July 5, 2025, <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2025/07/06/camp-mystic-girls-identified-linnie-mccown-mary-stevens-texas-flood-victims/84485946007/>

³ Jayme Lozano Carver, "Camp Mystic says it's grieving the loss' of 27 campers and counselors," *Texas Tribune*, July 7, 2025, <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/07/07/texas-hill-country-flooding-camp-mystic/>

⁴ Karen Hua, John Kelly, Nikki Nolan, and Paula Cohen, "Timeline shows when emergency alerts warned of Texas flood disaster," *CBS News*, July 7, 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-flood-emergency-alerts-timeline/>

coordinators, what special flood statements were issued to the public, and what coordination occurred between NWS and local leaders.

Since the early retirement in April 2025 of the Warning and Coordination Meteorologist, who had over 32 years of experience, and more than half with NWS Austin/San Antonio, NWS has not filled this role, which is critical to informing local public emergency response officials and private stakeholders, including camp directors.⁵

With no response to my May 20 request nor to my followup inquiries on June 2 and June 13, I have modified my initial questions to more fully understand how such shortages affected Central Texas during recent floods:

1. Verify which positions at the NWS Austin/San Antonio office were unfilled on July 1, 2025.
2. Is it correct that each of these positions remained unfilled because of the Administration hiring freeze?
3. On July 3 and the morning of July 4, which staffers were on duty, and at what times did each arrive at the National Weather Service office?" Please provide the time cards for each, which show these times. For each, also include the title and the prior time served in their current role.
4. Regarding anyone who assumed the duties of the Warning and Coordination Meteorologist, what experience did that individual have working in which position and for how long at the NWS Austin/San Antonio office? And which other preexisting responsibilities was that individual expected to fulfill?
5. With one vacancy on an intended staff of three in the Hydrology and Observations department, which oversees rainfall, runoff, and flood projections, does NWS Austin/San Antonio maintain 24/7 coverage with a hydrologist during storms? During which specific times was a hydrologist in the office on July 3 and 4? Specifically, at what time did the hydrologist arrive on the morning of July 4?
6. For the other vacant positions, please also indicate who assumed these duties, what experience did that individual have working in which position and for how long at the NWS Austin/San Antonio office? And which other preexisting responsibilities was that individual expected to fulfill?
7. Following the June 2, 2025 announcement that NWS was taking immediate action to sustain mission-critical operations, did the NWS Austin/San Antonio office receive any short-term Temporary Duty Assignments (TDYs) to fill critical staff roles?
8. Did any NWS Austin/San Antonio staff depart prior to July 4, 2025 to serve as TDYs in other NWS offices?
9. Have any NWS Austin/San Antonio vacancies been included and advertised among the 126 permanent, mission-critical field positions under an exception to the NWS hiring freeze?

⁵ Nick Bannin, "Head of local weather warnings takes early retirement as NOAA cuts continue," *KXAN*, April 21, 2025, <https://www.kxan.com/weather/weather-blog/head-of-local-weather-warnings-takes-early-retirement-as-noaa-cuts-continue/>

10. Is the NWS Austin/San Antonio Warning and Coordination Meteorologist role included among the 126 permanent, mission-critical field positions under an exception to the NWS hiring freeze?
11. On July 2, 3, and 4, 2025, what calls were made, when, to which public and private community leaders to alert them of the coming storms? What guidance was provided to them? To whom, at what time, with what directions were any calls made to Camp Mystic or any of the other youth camps along the Guadalupe?
12. What public messaging products were published before July 3, 2025 to educate and inform Kerr County residents of the coming storms? If no special flood statements were issued, explain why not.
13. Provide the chat logs for NWS Austin/ San Antonio on July 2, 3 and 4, 2025.
14. Is it correct that there was less outreach on July 2-4 than that which was provided prior to the 2015 Wimberley Memorial Day flood?

Given considerable concern over the recent tragedy, I look forward to your prompt answers.

Sincerely,



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

CC:

Pat Vesper
Meteorologist-in-Charge
US Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Weather Service
Austin/San Antonio, TX
2090 Airport Road
New Braunfels, TX 78130

Roderick Anderson
Acting Inspector General
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Howard Lutnick

Secretary of Commerce
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 20, 2025

Laura Grimm

Chief of Staff performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and
Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

1301 Constitution Avenue, Room 5128

Washington, DC 20230

Dear Ms. Grimm,

As the National Weather Service (NWS) faces severe understaffing in offices across the country, I write to inquire about current operations at NWS Austin/San Antonio and plans for continued operations in the event of further staff vacancies, extreme weather events, and proposed budget cuts to NOAA. Before the beginning of the Trump Administration, NWS Austin/San Antonio had an 11% vacancy rate. With recent departures of the Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Science and Operations Officer, and Observing Program Leader, the local office now has a 22% vacancy rate. This is critical understaffing.

Increasing instances of triple-digit temperatures, fire-related red flag warnings, and flash floods all require timely notice by NWS to protect Central Texas families. As the worsening climate crisis exacerbates temperatures and disasters, Austin faces extreme weather risks, especially in the increasingly long summers. A 22% vacancy rate at the local NWS jeopardizes the timeliness of forecasts and warnings on which the community relies.

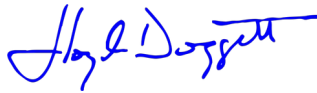
Understaffing is not unique to Austin. NWS Austin/San Antonio is one of the 52 out of 122 forecasting offices with a vacancy rate above 20%, while an additional eight offices have such a high vacancy rate that they cannot maintain 24/7/365 coverage. At least ten weather balloon release sites have limited or suspended launches due to personnel cuts. To manage such severe understaffing, NOAA is now offering to pay for moving expenses for staff to transfer to critical-need offices.

To understand how NOAA plans to maintain constant and complete coverage of weather forecasting and warnings, both across the country and in Austin/San Antonio, please provide answers to the following questions by June 2, 2025:

1. Confirm the current vacancy rate at NWS Austin/San Antonio as of May 20, 2025 and as of January 20, 2025.

2. What steps are being taken, if any, to ensure requested transfers do not worsen understaffing at other offices?
3. Should NOAA not fill the current 155 critical vacancies with transfers by its internal goal of May 27, 2025, what steps will the agency take to fill these roles?
4. Have any services at the NWS Austin/San Antonio office changed or degraded following staff departures since January 20, 2025?
5. What plan for continuity of operations is currently in effect at NWS Austin/San Antonio to manage services with critical understaffing?
6. In the event of an extreme weather event, is NWS Austin/San Antonio adequately staffed to provide full, constant forecasting and warning services?
7. What plan for continuity of operations is in place for if vacancies exceed the current rate? At what rate will NWS Austin/San Antonio be unable to maintain critical services?
8. If enacted, how will the Trump Administration's proposed \$209 million cut to procurement of weather satellites and infrastructure affect forecast operations at NWS Austin/San Antonio?

Sincerely,



Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

CC:
Pat Vesper
Meteorologist-in-Charge
US Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Weather Service
Austin/San Antonio, TX
2090 Airport Road
New Braunfels, TX 78130