

**AMERICAN METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY
NEWS RELEASE**

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WEATHER CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SILVER AND GOLD

As the world tunes in to the 2002 Olympic Winter Games this week, the focus will be on the athletes, the medals, the winners and the losers, and of course, the weather.

From snow to fog, from wind to air quality, from warm temperatures to rain—weather can delay events, strand spectators on the roads and even make a difference between silver and gold for some athletes.

Weather impacts are not new to the Olympic Winter Games. Weather-related delays for alpine ski events occurred during the 1984 Sarajevo, the 1992 Albertville, and the 1998 Nagano Games, while warm temperatures and high winds affected operations during the 1988 Calgary Games.

And the meteorological community is ready. For the first time, U.S. government and private meteorologists, as well as academic experts are working together to forecast the weather at the Olympic Games. More than 50 scientists with more 700 years of Utah meteorology experience will provide the most accurate, timely and venue-specific weather forecasts during the Games.

The Federal government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Weather Service will provide the base-level meteorological and hydrological services used by the weather partners. This includes issuing winter storm warnings to the state's two million residents as well as an estimated one and one-half million visitors expected to come to the Games. The weather service will also brief public safety, aviation operations, security and emergency management officials.

At least twice each day, the weather service will issue a special hazardous winter forecast during the games for the various transportation corridors leading to the Olympic venues. This forecast will aid the public who will be traveling to and from the various "park and ride" lots and also help transportation officials ensure a smooth flow of traffic.

The Olympic Games Chief Meteorologist is Mark Eubank. He will lead a 13- member team of private meteorologists who will focus on preparing forecasts for the outdoor venues, critical for the athletes. For example, ski jumper safety can be a concern

even in light winds if the winds are gusty. The ability to compete for medals in nordic or alpine ski events requires proper preparation and waxing of ski bases for the snow conditions that are observed during an event. A day prior to the men 's or women 's downhill, top-rated skiers and their teams evaluate current and future weather and snow conditions to select starting positions that they hope will provide them with the best conditions for their run.

At least one meteorologist, with instant access to a variety of meteorological data, will be at each venue. This team will also continually brief management officials, venue managers, coaches and athletes, on weather conditions and forecasts. Eubank's team will be responsible for the forecasts for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Eubank is also KSL-TV's chief meteorologist at the local NBC-TV affiliate.

The University of Utah has developed weather tracking systems designed specifically for Utah and the Games. Five years ago the University received funding from the United States Government and began installing weather sensors that detect temperature, wind, humidity and precipitation at each of the venues. Each venue has an average of three sensors.

The official Olympic Weather Center will be located at the weather service's Salt Lake City Forecast Office where the representatives from the private and government meteorological teams will prepare their daily forecasts.


Complete details about weather support for the Olympic Games is outlined in an article entitled "Weather Support to the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games" by John Horel from the University of Meteorology and colleagues from the Olympic Weather Team, in the February issue of the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*. More information about the Winter Olympics is available at <http://www.saltlake2002.com>

The American Meteorological Society is the nation's leading professional society for scientists in the atmospheric and related sciences. <http://www.ametsoc.org/ams>

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Note to Editors: PDF or faxed copies of the paper are available to journalists from Stephanie Kenitzer, AMS press office (425-432-2192) or Kenitzer@dc.ametsoc.org. Media wanting to schedule interviews with the Olympic Weather Team should contact Marilu Trainor at marilu.trainor@noaa.gov or 801-524-4467 (During Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Games)

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