

UK and Met Éireann Storm Naming

Throughout autumn and winter 2015/16, the Met Office and Met Éireann rolled out a pilot communications campaign, designed to bring greater public awareness of windstorms affecting Ireland and the UK. The 'Name our Storms' campaign has been hugely successful in clarifying and unifying the message around the risk posed by imminent wind storms across the UK and Ireland.

Key Objective

We aim to protect and strengthen our authoritative voice and support our aim to safeguard lives and property. The storm naming project aims to help raise awareness of damaging storms so as to encourage the public to take steps to protect life and property.

Specific communications objectives

Monitoring the effect naming storms has on the behaviour of the public. Specifically, to identify whether naming storms creates greater awareness of the events and ultimately leads to action by the general public.

- To be measured by additional questions added to YouGov research as part of the brand 'Trust Tracker' omnibus surveys.

To provide a single authoritative naming system for the storms that affect UK and Ireland, reducing confusion and enabling the message to spread quickly and widely.

- Measured through Twitter and Facebook interactions, use of storm names amongst members of the public and uptake of official storm name usage in the press (using press cuttings).

To engage the general public in the naming of storms, thus creating a sense of investment in the campaign, aiming to receive at least 5000 suggestions for names within the two week crowd-sourcing period.

-Arriving at an agreed alphabetical name list ahead of autumn 2015.

Communications Strategy

The campaign had three elements:

- **Crowd-sourcing storm names from the general public**, designed to increase awareness and engagement from the general public ahead of the storm season;
- **A cross-platform communications campaign** including PR, briefing of key stakeholders on use of new names ensuring consistency of use, dedicated website features page and social media efforts (graphics, # usage and animations) 24/7 help desk and Press Office out of hours support;
- **Collaborative working between Met Éireann and Met Office**, to ensure each party retained the right to make separate (and potentially different) assessments of risk for their nations, ensuring a consistent message to the public.

These broke down into a range of tactics:

Selecting appropriate channels to target a broad spectrum of society; including:

- Traditional media and PR to capture baby boomers and up
- Facebook and Twitter activity to capture generation x and y
- Cross promotion of naming activity on Instagram to capture generation Z

Quick turnaround on design of storm content – updating Twitter and Facebook graphics and pulling together a range of animations of the weather fronts responsible for the storms, a dedicated 'Storm Centre' updated regularly on the met Office website and, when possible, the storm name featured in a 'Twitter moment.' All free/low cost and using in-house skills.

Up-to-the-minute developments on the weather situation posted on social media 24/7 through media service team, 24/7 helpdesk operators and manned Press Office the public had access to up-to-the-minute information from a range of sources round the clock.

Communications Implementation

A small team from Communications, Forecasting and Science assessed options for a system to provide one clear message in times of severe weather. The team proposed a pragmatic system tied to NSWWS (National Severe Weather Warning Service) wind warnings, naming storms (or potential storms) which may cause significant wind disruption to the UK and/or Ireland.

This would name storms 'when it really mattered' and also entailing minimal operational effort-the 'naming' following naturally from the existing decision-making process for warnings and allowed the Met Office and Met Éireann to create a low/no cost campaign for maximum impact through using existing in-house resources.

How were the storms names sourced and agreed upon?

Names were crowd-sourced from the general public ahead of the start of the autumn season by drawing upon the Met Office social media following and users of the Met Éireann website. Suggestions sent in as follows:

- Tweeting to @metoffice using #nameourstorms followed by the suggestion;
- Suggestions provided through the Met Office Facebook page;
- Suggestions provided through the Met Éireann "contact us" facility on www.met.ie;
- Emailing pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk with the subject name of 'nameourstorms' and the suggested name in the email.
- All suggestions were compiled into a long list. However, it was agreed that names should not be used if they have previously been associated with storms that caused a loss of life in other parts of the world. Also, to ensure the campaign was in line with the WMO Atlantic Hurricane naming convention, we did not include names which begin with the letters Q, U, X, Y and Z, thus maintaining consistency for official storm naming in the North Atlantic.
- ***When were storms officially named?***
As severe weather approached Meteorologists making the assessment contacted their equivalents in the other NMS (National Met Service) to share their

interpretations and the intention to name the storm. The right of each NMS to make separate (and potentially different) assessments of risk for their nations was retained. Typically, in order for the wind storm to be named, a large-scale cyclonic system was predicted with potential to cause 'medium' or 'high' wind impacts on the UK and/or Ireland, i.e. if a yellow, amber or red warning for wind had been issued by Met Éireann and/or the Met Office's National Service Weather Warning Service (NSWWS).

- ***How was the campaign communicated?***

Once the Chief Meteorologists from both parties had agreed on the situation, the message would be communicated internally at the Chief's morning brief and then further disseminated through the Press Office before going public. Media would be alerted through press releases and subsequent social media activity. Dedicated web pages holding further information, 'UK Storm Centre' were also kept up to date with the latest weather situation. The service desk (a 24/7 operation) were given a list of FAQs to assist them with enquiries from members of the public.

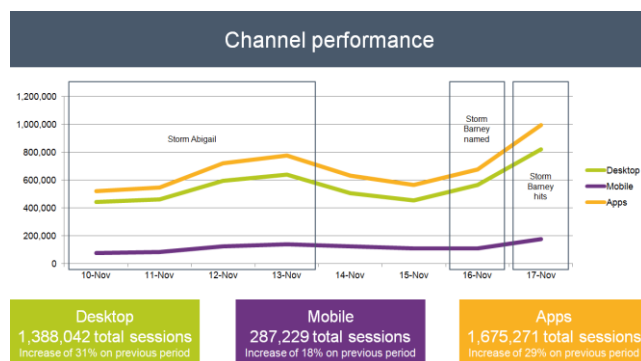
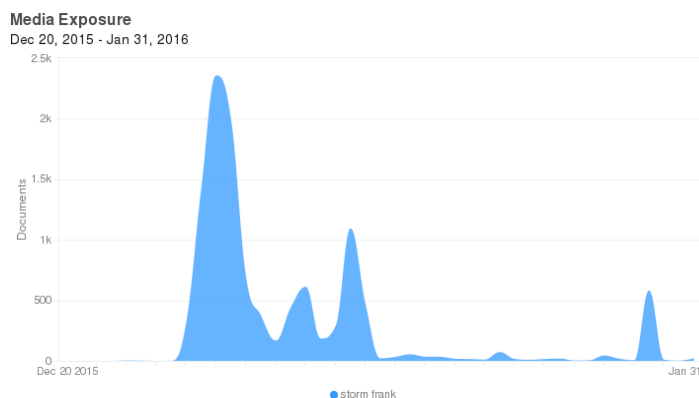


Campaign effectiveness in detail

- According to research commission after the first 7 storms with YouGov, the majority of respondents changed their behavior in some way upon hearing about a named storm:
 - **39%** assessed the local weather forecast
 - **15%** warned their family and/or friends about the storm
 - **12%** prepared for longer journey times
 - **9%** followed further advice from a local authority and/or emergency services
 - **1%** took steps to protect their homes(sandbags, boarding up windows)
- Greater authority for our 'single voice' around severe weather and our communication around strong winds events which will ultimately have a positive effect on public safety. All news media referred to the storms by name as measured by press cuttings. We have published 27 news releases and blogs about the named storms (of which there have been 10 so far). As an example, press coverage from Storm Desmond – total pieces of UK coverage in December **23,300**. Peak between 5th and 9th with maximum coverage on the day of the storm (5th) with **2,560** pieces of coverage.
- Over **10000** (and counting!) suggestions for storm names have been received so far from the public.
- It provided consistency with, and leadership of, European thinking on the integration of severe weather messaging.
- Increased public engagement through social media- Twitter **322k** tweets to Met Office page referring to storms, **50k** interactions to Met Office Facebook page regarding storm names, **470k** Tweets with #stormname across Twitter, vine of satellite video of Storm

Imogen achieved **1.6million loops** and all of the storms trended on twitter.

Channel performance and media exposure



Inputs	Outputs	Outtakes	Outcomes	Action taken by the public.
• Press releases • Media briefings • Storms centre pages • 'Name our Storms' campaign materials • FAQs drafted • Social media activity • Blog activity • Close working between Met Éireann and Met Office	• All news media referring to storms by name across print, web and television	• All storms trended on Twitter • Huge spike in engagement following naming of each storm • 470000 tweets using #Stormname • 10000 names submitted from the public and counting	• 39% of people assessed the local weather forecast • 15% warned their family and/or friends • 12% prepared for longer journey times • 9% followed further advice from a local authority and/or emergency services	• One clear source and message around severe weather achieved.

Conclusions

- The success of this campaign can be seen in the change of behaviour reported by a cross-section of the public through the YouGov research.
- The level of engagement across social media, including the 'trending' of all of the storms on Twitter and consistent use of the appropriate names across all media was a real success.
- The level of collaboration with Met Éireann and Met Office has also been hugely beneficial to both parties.