Ken Graham

Director, National Weather Service

Speaker Bio:

Ken Graham is the Director of NOAA's National Weather Service and is the Assistant Administrator for Weather Services at NOAA. In this role, he is responsible for the day-to-day civilian weather operations for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters, and ocean areas.

Prior to becoming the 17th NWS Director on June 7, 2022, he served as the director of NOAA's National Hurricane Center, leading the nation through numerous hurricanes, including 30 named storms during the record-breaking 2020 hurricane season. His tireless energy to build effective partnerships at all levels of government and his close work with emergency managers underpin the nation's preparedness ahead of hazardous weather.

Graham is the first NWS director with a vast amount of operational field experience. He worked his way up through the ranks at NWS, mostly in field offices, starting as an intern meteorologist in 1994 at the New Orleans/Baton Rouge weather forecast office.

Before his tenure at NHC, he led the New Orleans/Baton Rouge weather forecast office as the Meteorologist-in-Charge with responsibility for providing lifesaving forecasts and warnings to people living in the weather-vulnerable Gulf region.

As the meteorologist-in-charge, Graham led his team to serve 22 Louisiana parishes and eight Mississippi counties, and directly supported seven separate billion dollar loss weather events since 2008. He implemented innovative Impact-Based Decision Support Services during hurricanes Gustav, Ike, Isaac, and Nate as well as Tropical Storm Cindy, the Baton Rouge Flood of 2016, Mississippi River floods, and several tornado outbreaks. Graham worked to revamp the operational focus to working side-by-side with emergency managers and other decision makers during emergencies and each year, led training and exercise sessions with local, state, and Federal decision makers to prepare for hurricanes. For these efforts, Graham was honored with the Louisiana Governor's Emergency Service Award in 2014.

During the Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster, Graham led the cooperative intergovernmental engagement effort for NWS in the region and sustained Emergency Response Meteorologist deployments for more than five months while issuing more than 4,300 Spot Forecasts. His office received the National Weather Association's Operational Meteorology Award, Department of Commerce Gold Medal for Decision Support Services, and was the National Weather Museum's Meteorologist of the Year for his support during the oil spill.

He also previously served as the Systems Operations Chief at Southern Region Headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas and as the Chief of Meteorological Services at NWS headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. He was also the meteorologist-in-charge at NWS forecast offices in Corpus Christi, Texas and Birmingham, Alabama.

Graham earned a bachelor's degree in atmospheric science from the University of Arizona and a master's degree in geoscience from Mississippi State University. He was named the 2022 Weatherperson of the Year by the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes and was a 2021 finalist for the Partnership for Public Service's Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal.

Graham, a licensed HAM Radio Operator, is a member of the American Meteorological Society, the National Weather Association, and the International Association of Emergency Managers.

A native of Phoenix, Graham and his wife, Laura, have three daughters.