



FROM WARNINGS TO ACTION:

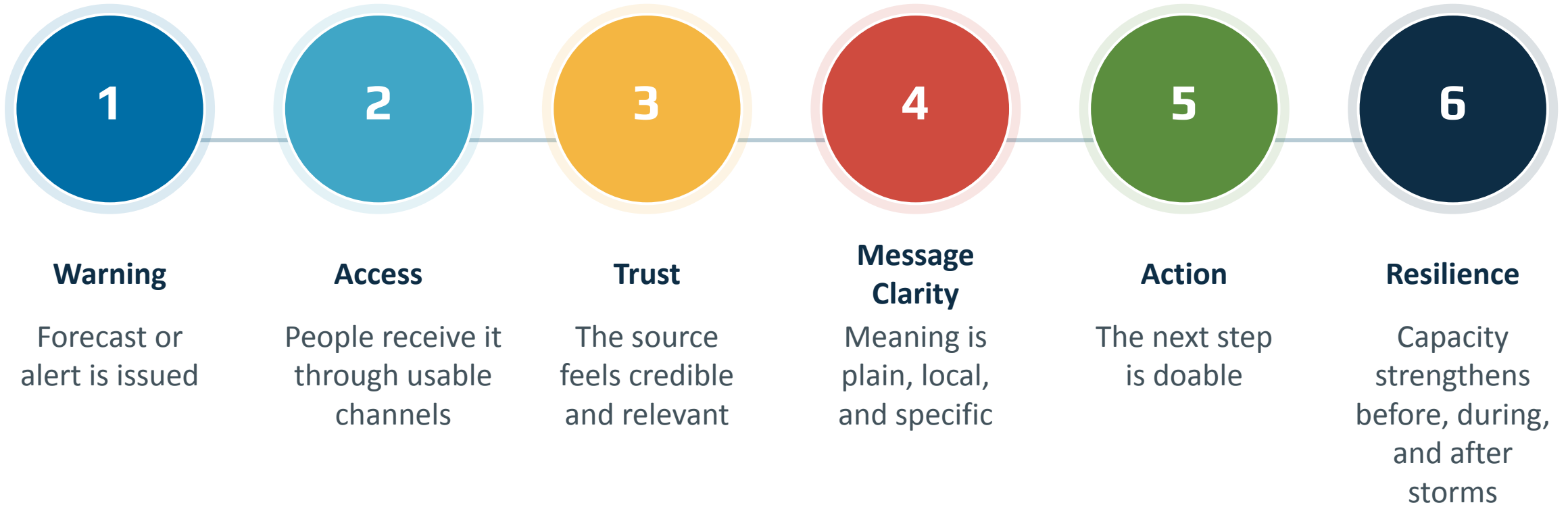
Risk Communication & Community Resilience Through Information Access Points

Elizabeth C. Ray, Ryan Truchelut, Mildred Perreault, Marcia A. Mardis



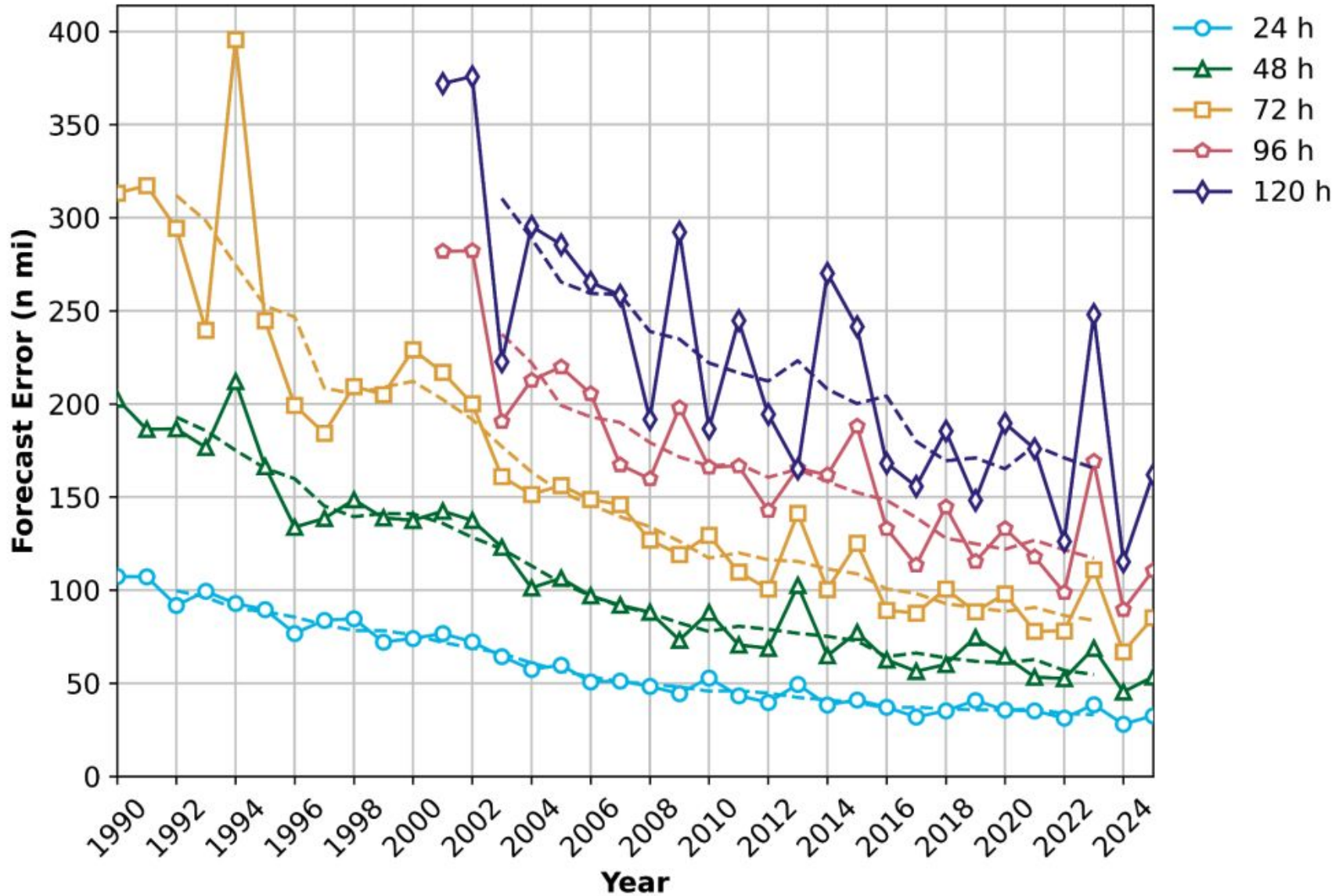
The Warning-to-Action Chain

Warnings build resilience only when every link works.

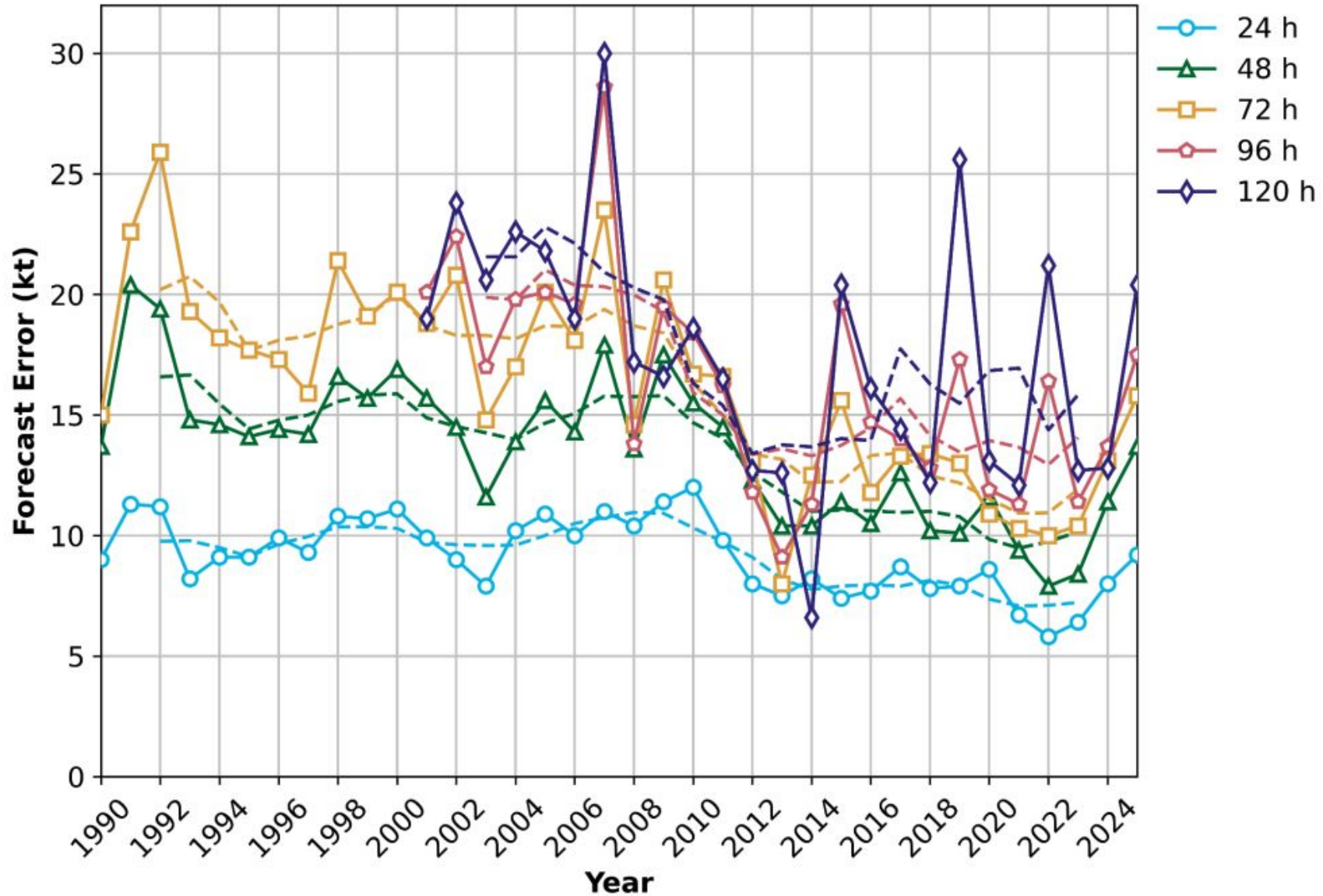


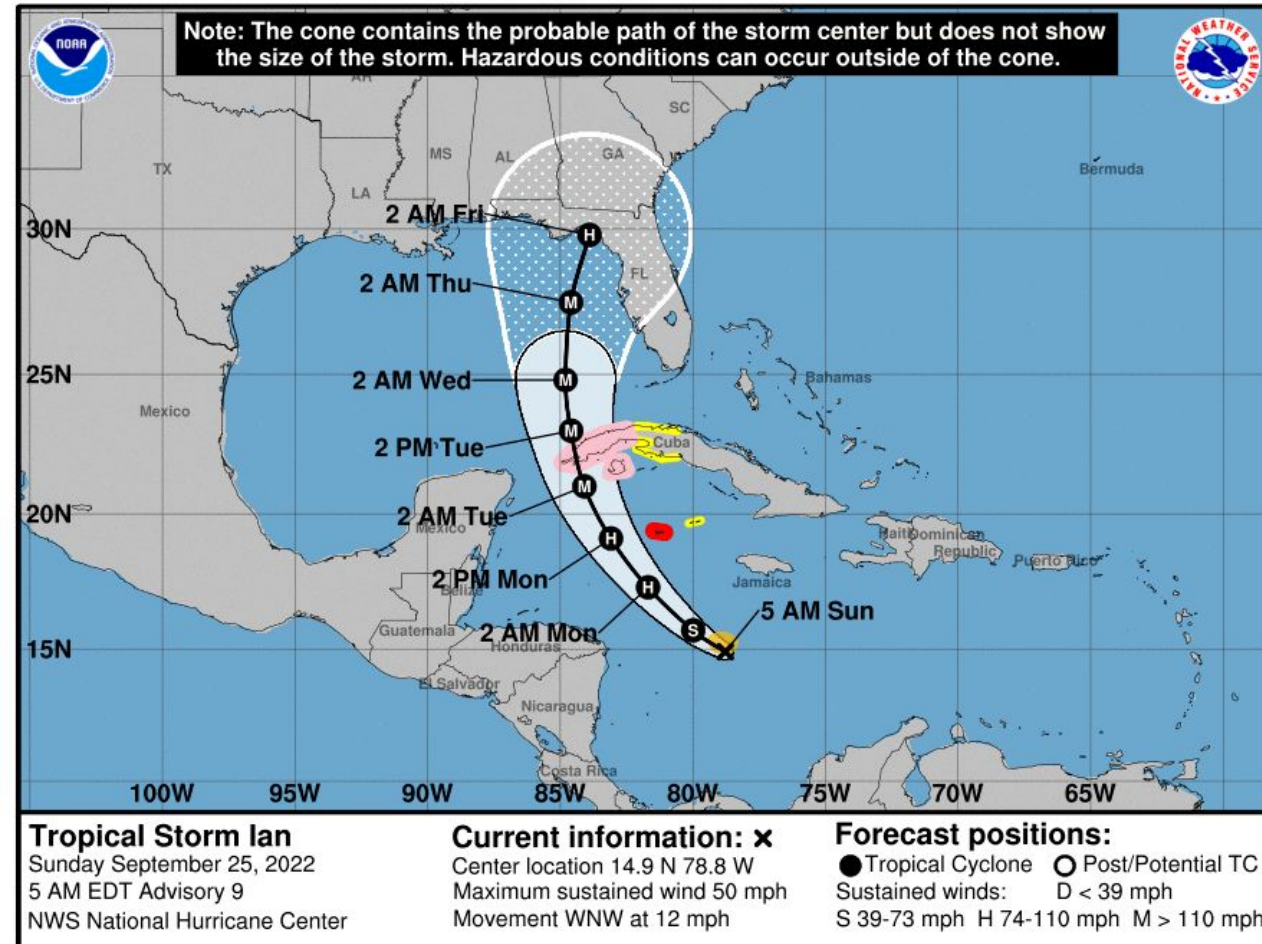
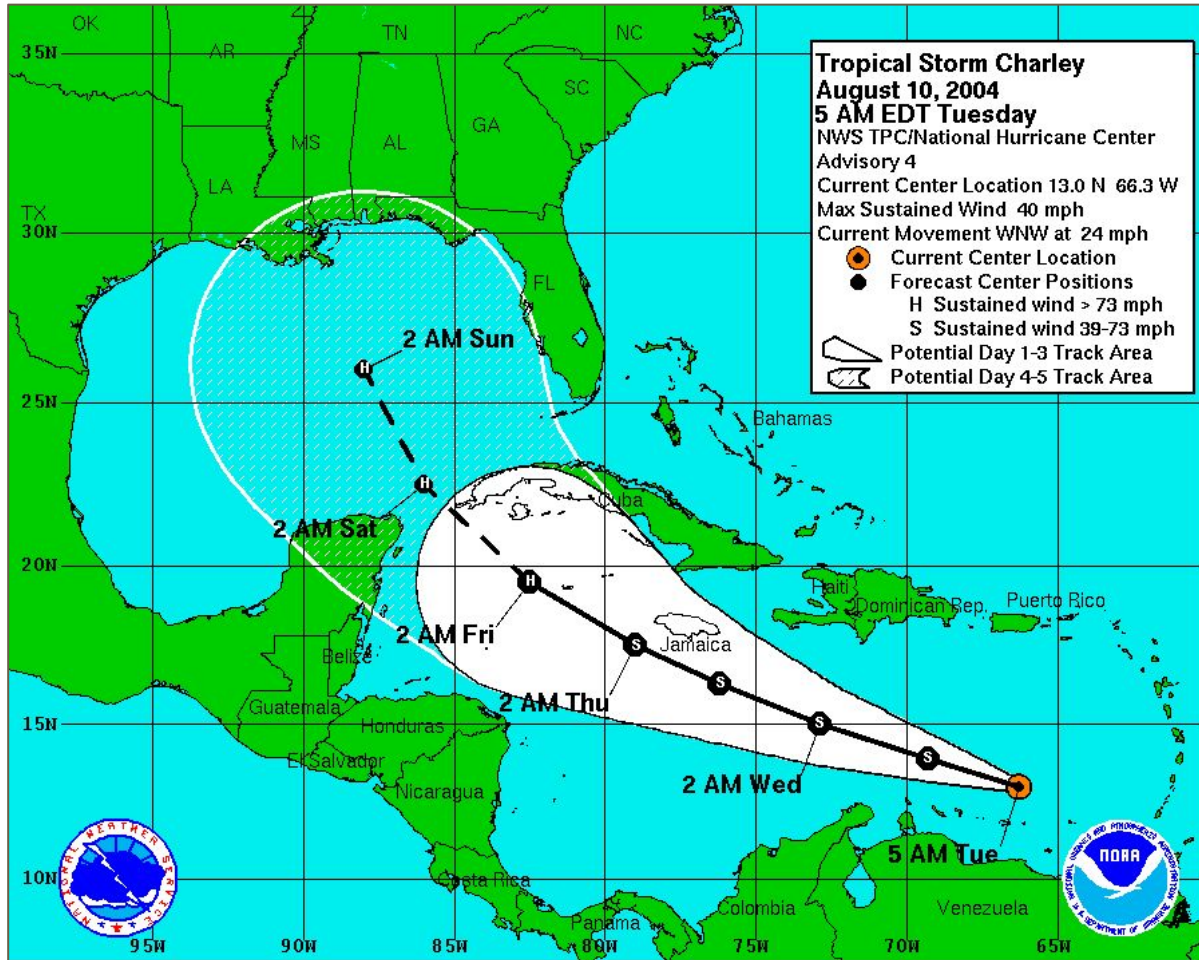
When one link breaks, the warning stalls before it becomes protective action.

NHC Official Track Error Trend Atlantic Basin

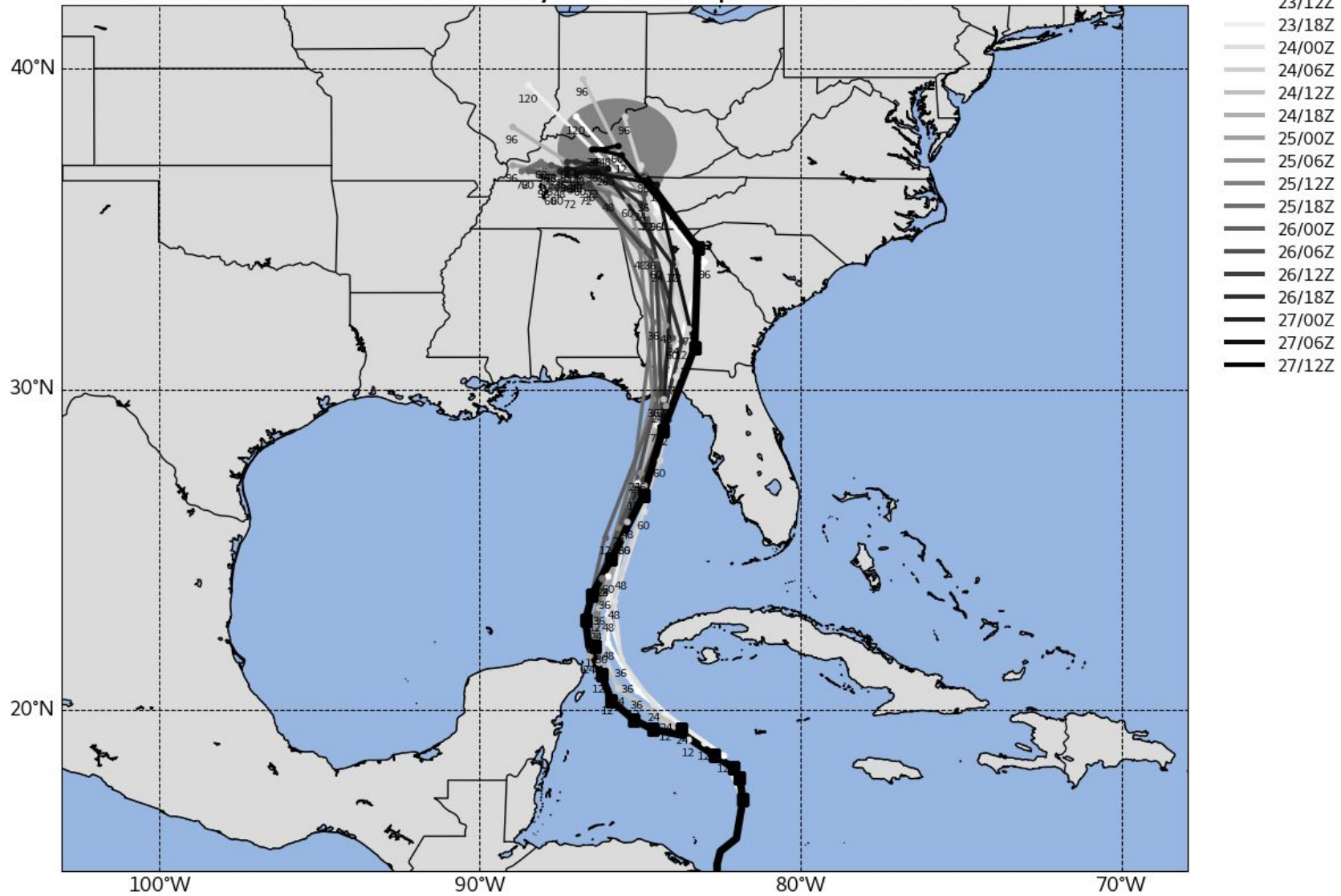


NHC Official Intensity Error Trend Atlantic Basin



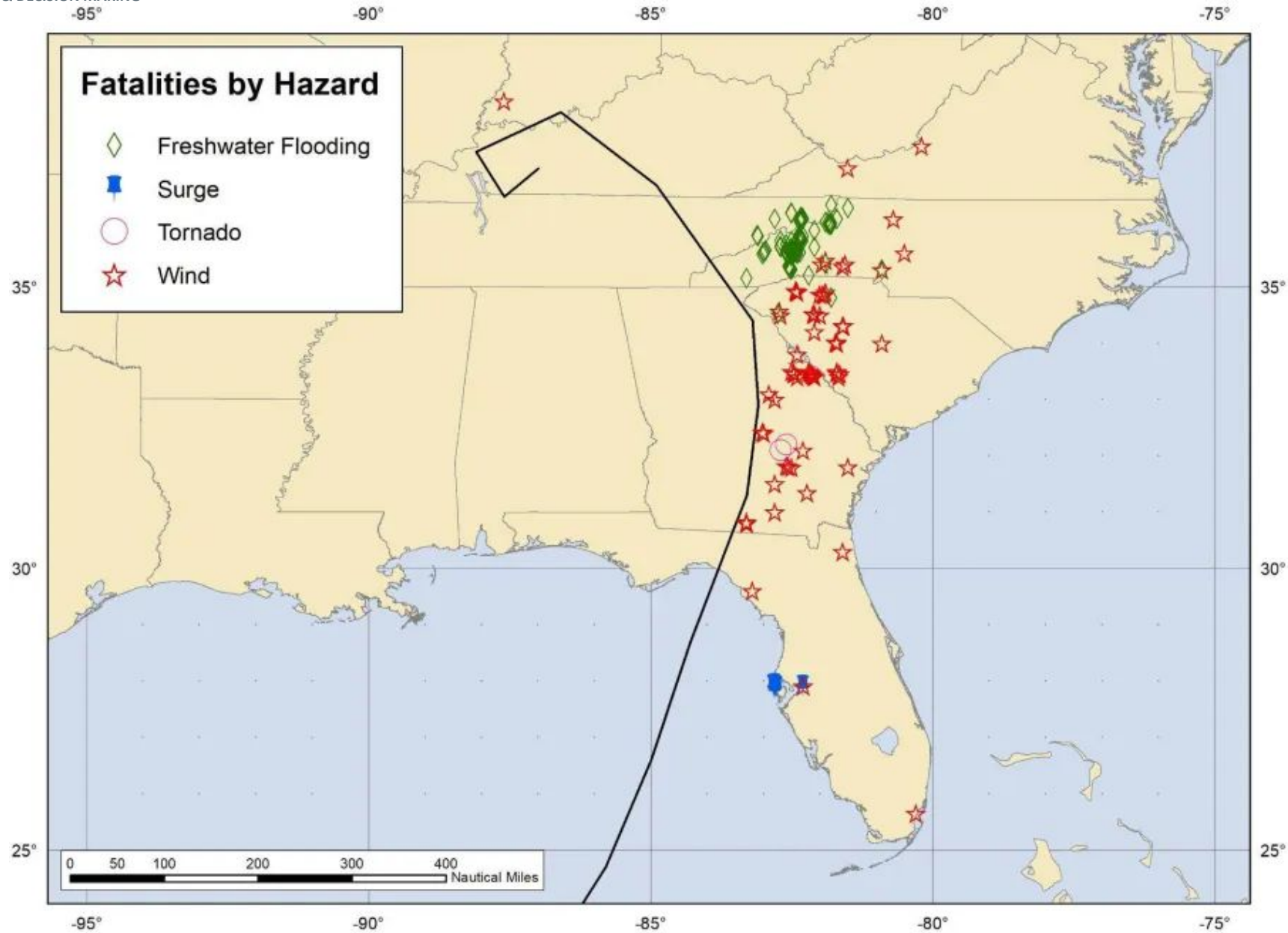


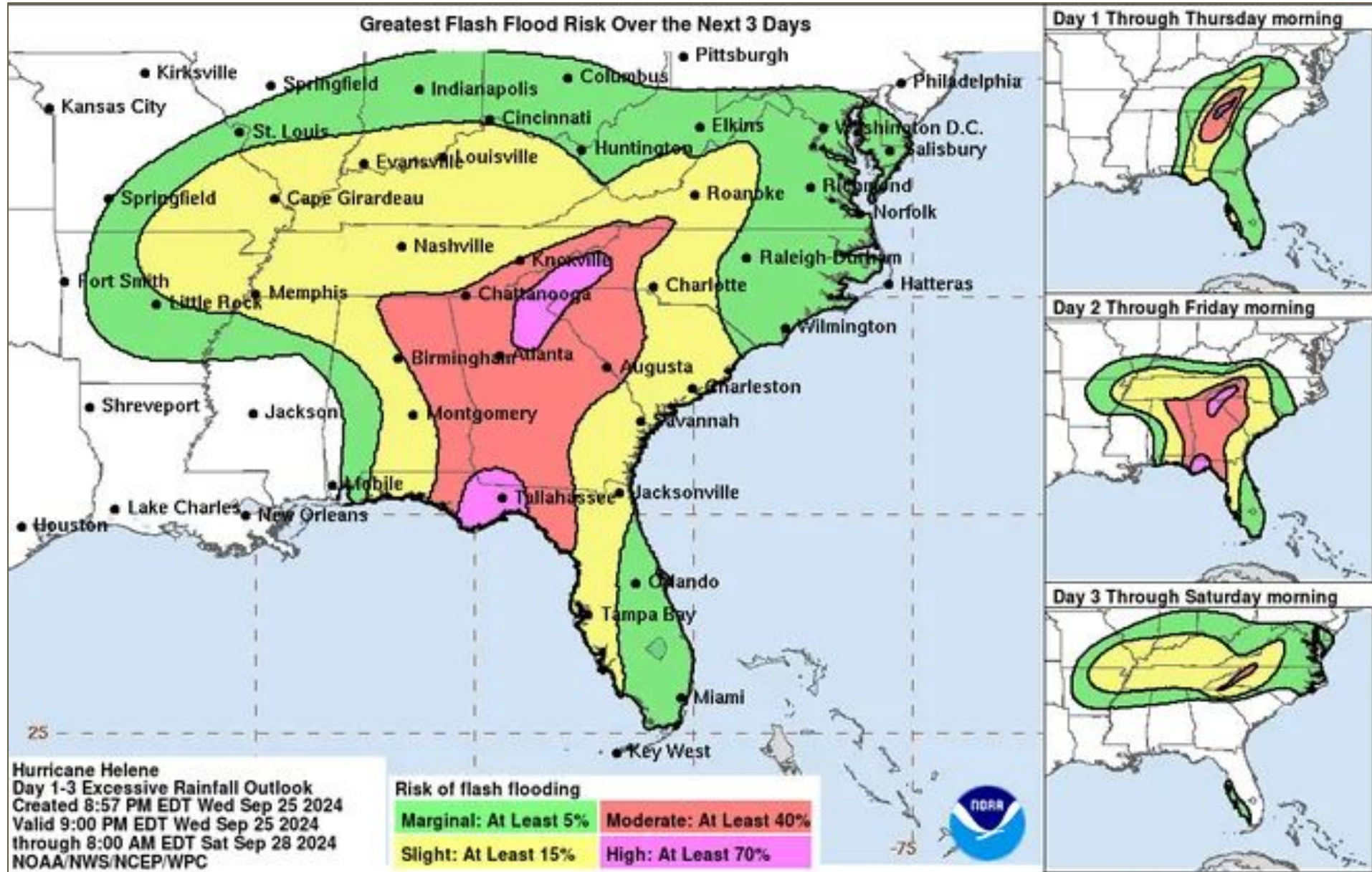
Atlantic Helene NHC Forecast Track History as of Fri 27 Sep 2024 1800 UTC



<https://uwm.edu/hurricane>
Twitter: @HurricaneModels

**DISCLAIMER: Not to be used in place of official sources!
No liability is implied or expressed by your use of this site.**





FL Librarians' Roles in Natural Disasters

Obligated Emergency Responders

- Seconded by FEMA and local government
- Provide materials and computer access
- Legal advice and volunteer vetting
- Not always formally included in local planning and response

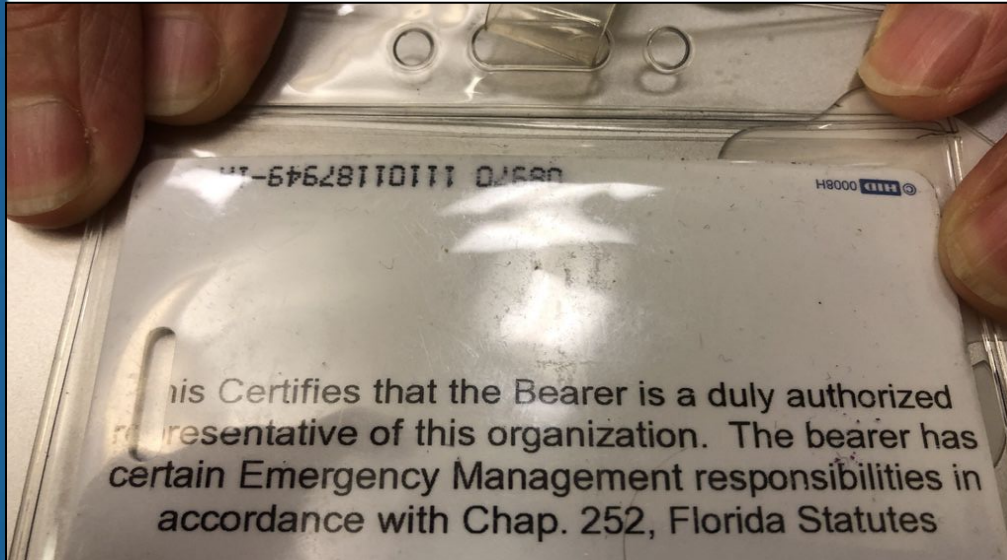


Serve High-Need, Vulnerable Populations

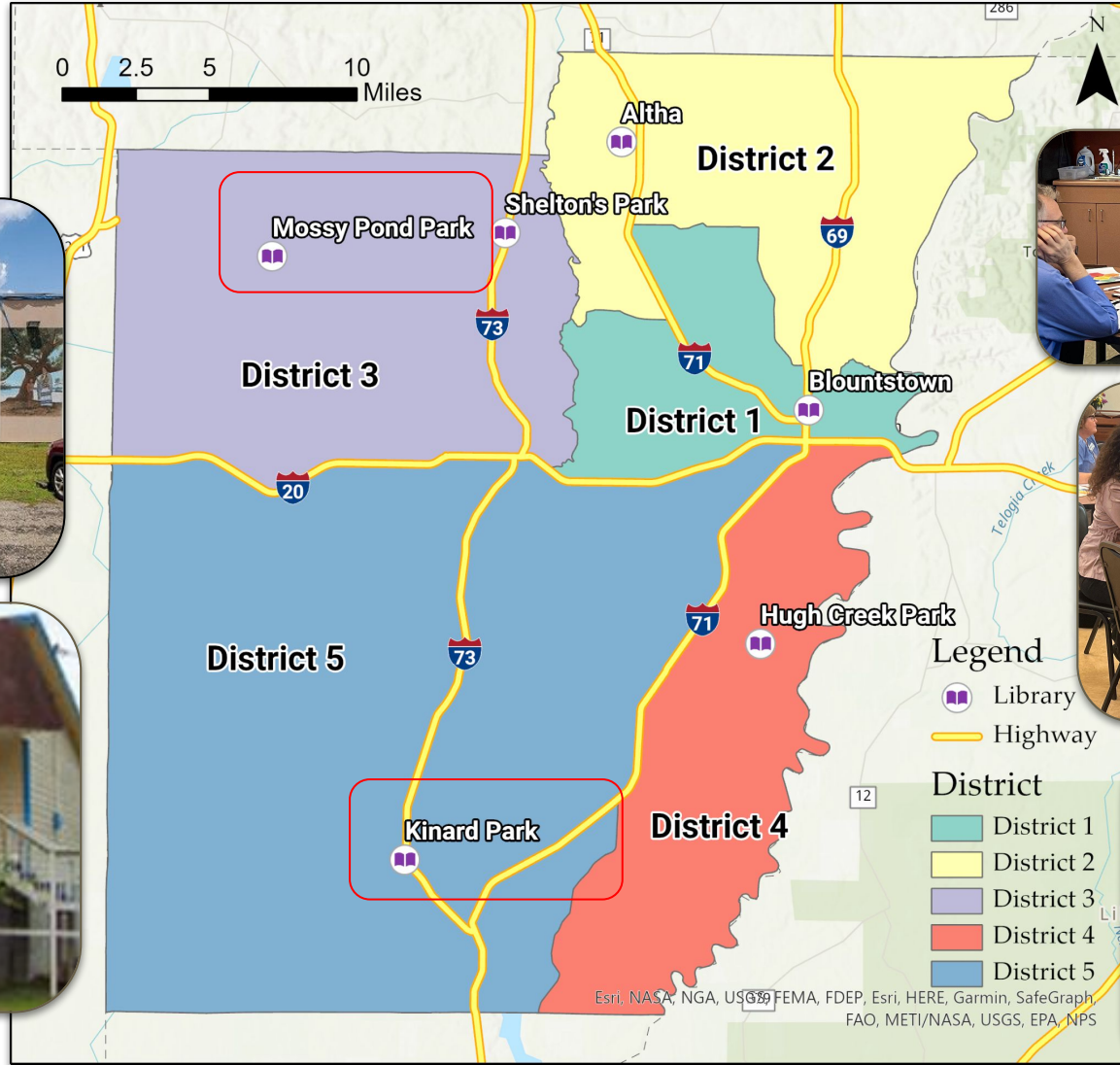
- Children in and out of school
- Growing senior population
- Low income and at-risk populations
- Persons with disabilities

Small & Rural Libraries Especially Community Resiliency

- Only ~50% have current, comprehensive disaster plans
- Librarians are also residents of affected communities
- Librarians deliver services in and out of the library

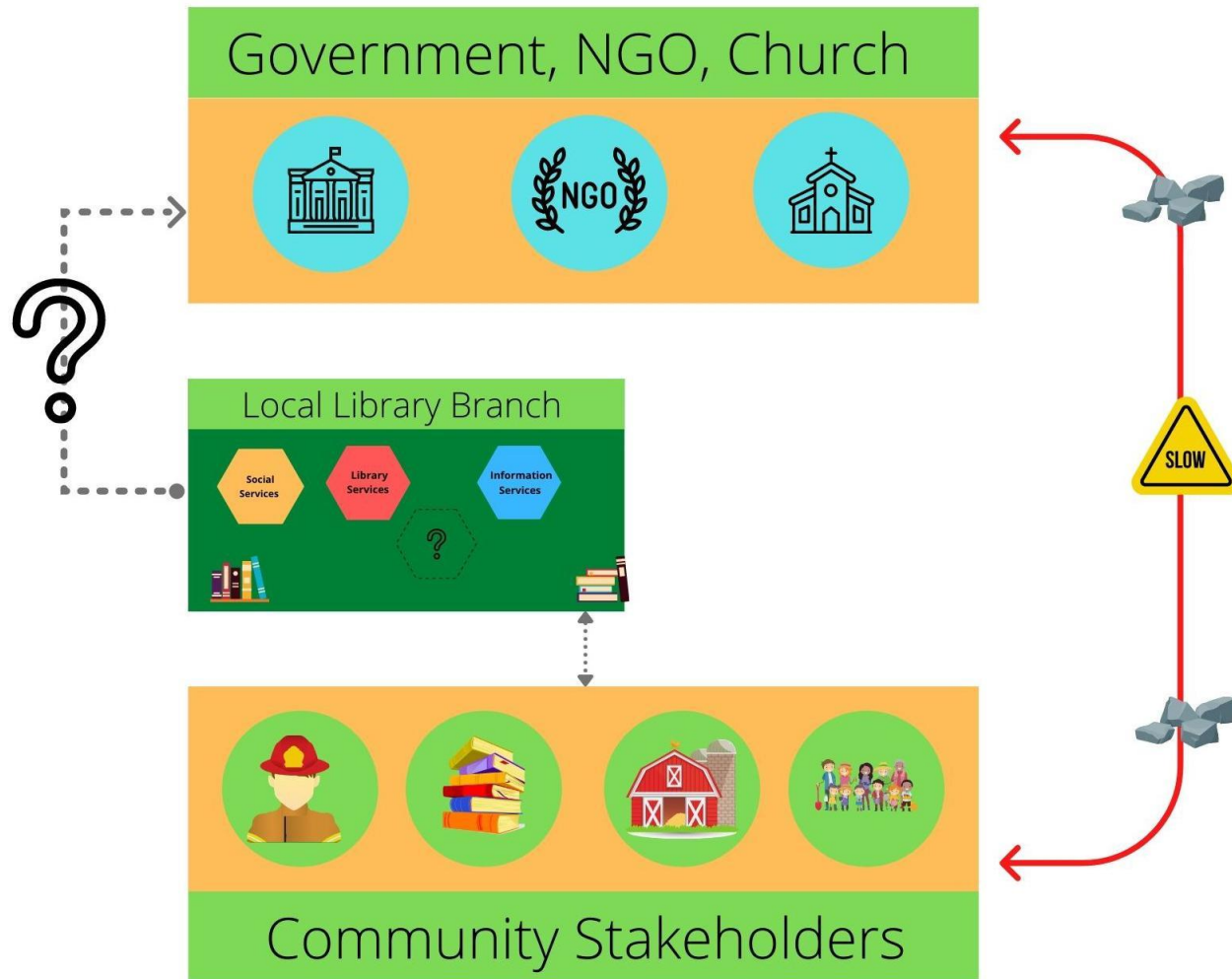


Why Calhoun?





How does information flow in Florida's rural communities during a disaster?



Calhoun County 2020-2021

- Interviewed key stakeholders
- Analyzed meeting transcripts and other records
- Examined damage data pertaining to Hurricane Michael, roadways, population distribution
- Information roadblocks due to lack of documentation and centralization

Public libraries were useful but underutilized

What goes into a Resiliency Hub?



Community Collaboration

Hubs can only be effective if the community is actively engaged in co-development and operation.



Meeting Everyday Needs

Hubs go beyond emergency response operations to meet community identified necessities.



Energy Access

Hubs provide access to water, electricity, and gas for utility needs like bathing and cooking

Trusted Location
Identified by community as a trusted place to go for information & resources.



Health

- Mobile health units
- First aid

Infrastructure

- Debris reporting
- Distribution
- Evacuation maps
- Disaster data keeping

Housing

- Sheltering
- Voucher assistance
- Hotel location

Community

- Information
- Legal assistance
- Internet and fax

Natural Resources

Economy/Workforce



Sample Resiliency Hub Plan Assets: Mossy Pond Example



District 3 (Mossy Pond)

Library guides: Sparse population, Predominantly white, median age 34, high poverty, educational attainment, low disability

District disaster impacts: wind damage, road debris, power outage, uninsured residents, unemployment, depopulation

Gaps: road block reporting, generator access, employment postings, telehealth, Spanish language versions of county and state documents, legal assistance, basic distribution





Sample Resiliency Hub Plan Assets: Kinard Park Example



District 5 (Kinard)

Library guides: More densely populated, Predominantly African American, median age 64, high poverty, low literacy, high disability; service area overlaps with main branch

District disaster impacts: flooding, road debris, power outages, medical emergencies

Gaps: legal assistance, social security form, ability to submit to FEMA, insurance company, etc., lack of tech skills





Disaster Communication as Sensemaking



TRUST IS SITUATIONAL
& EVOLVES OVER TIME

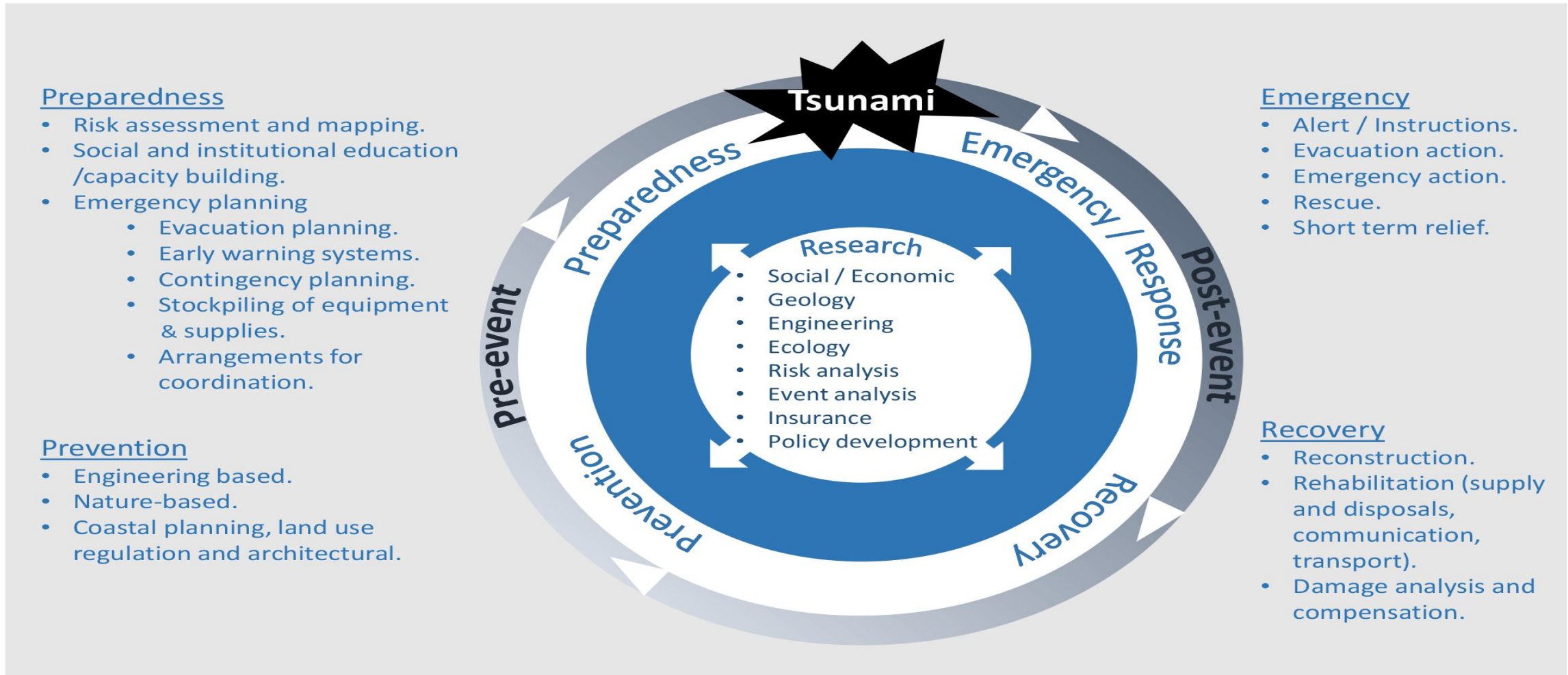


SCREENS ARE
EMOTIONAL
ENVIRONMENTS



STORM COMMUNICATION
IS SENSEMAKING
UNDER STRESS

Disaster Cycle



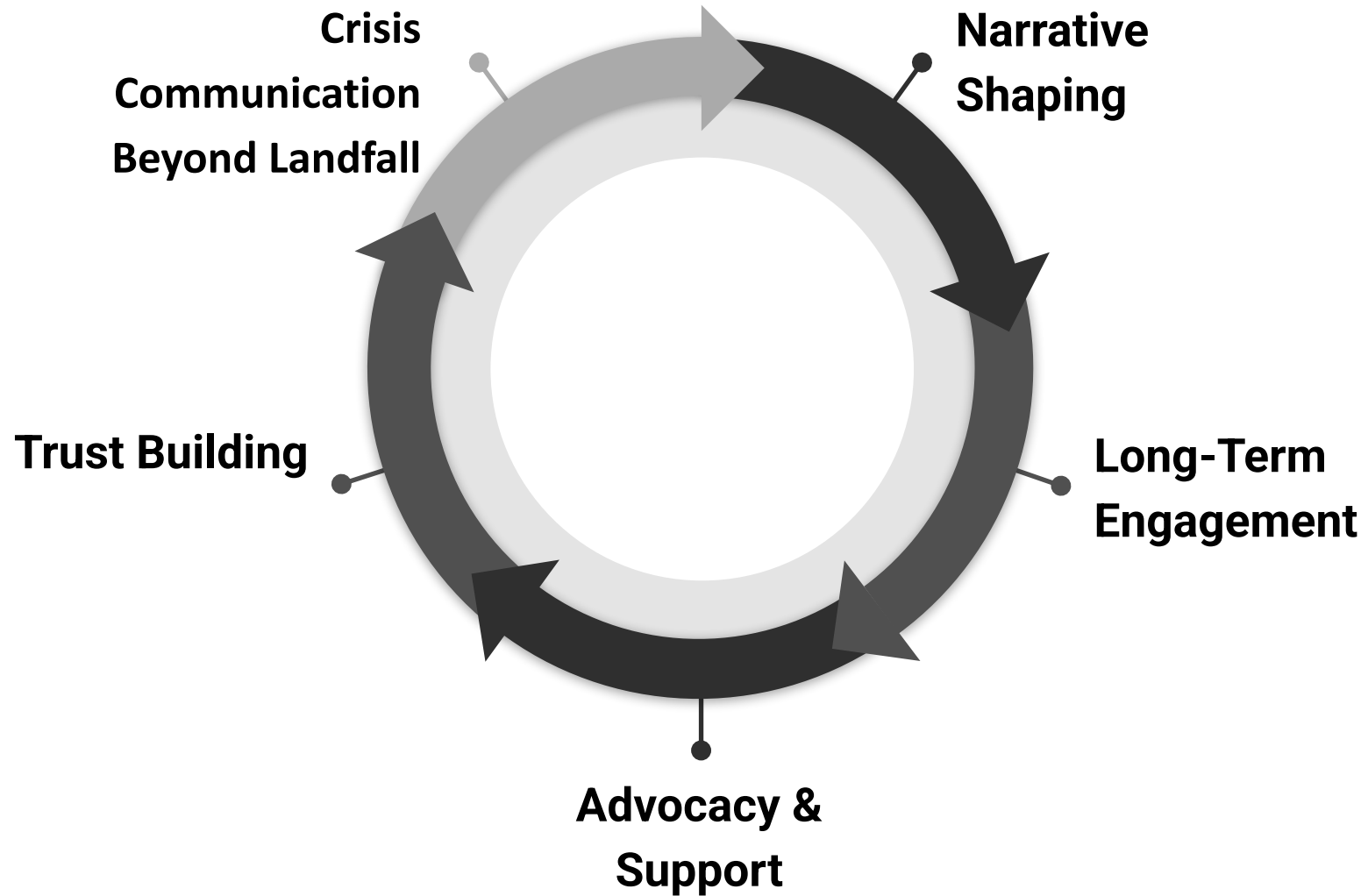
[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)



The Disaster Communication Ecosystem

- Local journalists
- Public relations practitioners & PIOs
- Citizen scientists
- Platforms & group chats
- Lived experience

Local Journalists as Strategic Community Stakeholders



PR Practitioners & PIOs in Disasters

- **Coordination between institutions & publics**
- **Communicating risk vs. uncertainty**
- **Preventing information vacuums**

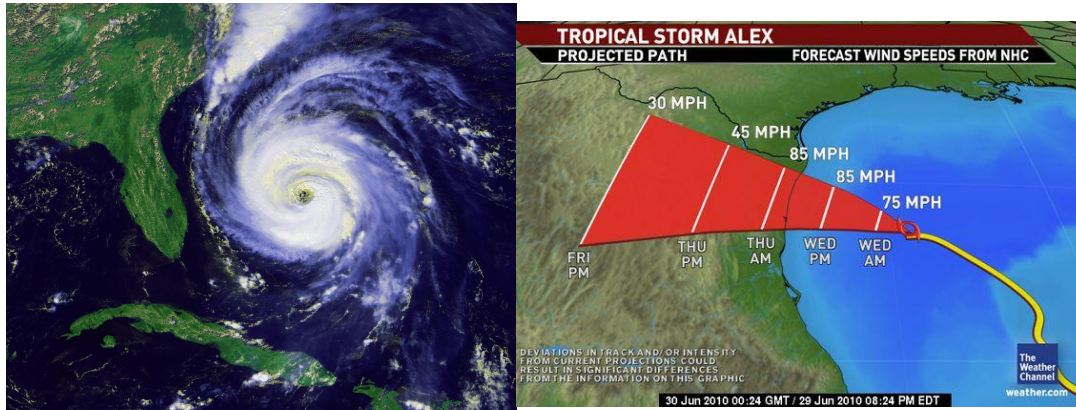
Citizen Scientists & Credible Proximity

- **Place-based observation**
- **Local knowledge and rapid data sharing**
- **Needs validation and translation**

Identity & Audience Interpretation

National Hurricane Preparedness Week 2012 runs from May 27th through June 2nd.

OVERVIEW	HURRICANE HAZARDS			FORECAST	PREPARE	ACT
Basics	Storm Surge	Winds	Inland Flooding	Forecast Process	Get A Plan!	Take Action
						
Sunday 27 May '12	Monday 28 May '12	Tuesday 29 May '12	Wednesday 30 May '12	Thursday 31 May '12	Friday 1 June '12	Saturday 2 June '12



- Same facts, different meanings
- Identity shapes trust & perception
- Audience interpretation is relational

Principles of Community-Based Disaster Communication

1

Design for ecosystems, not single channels

2

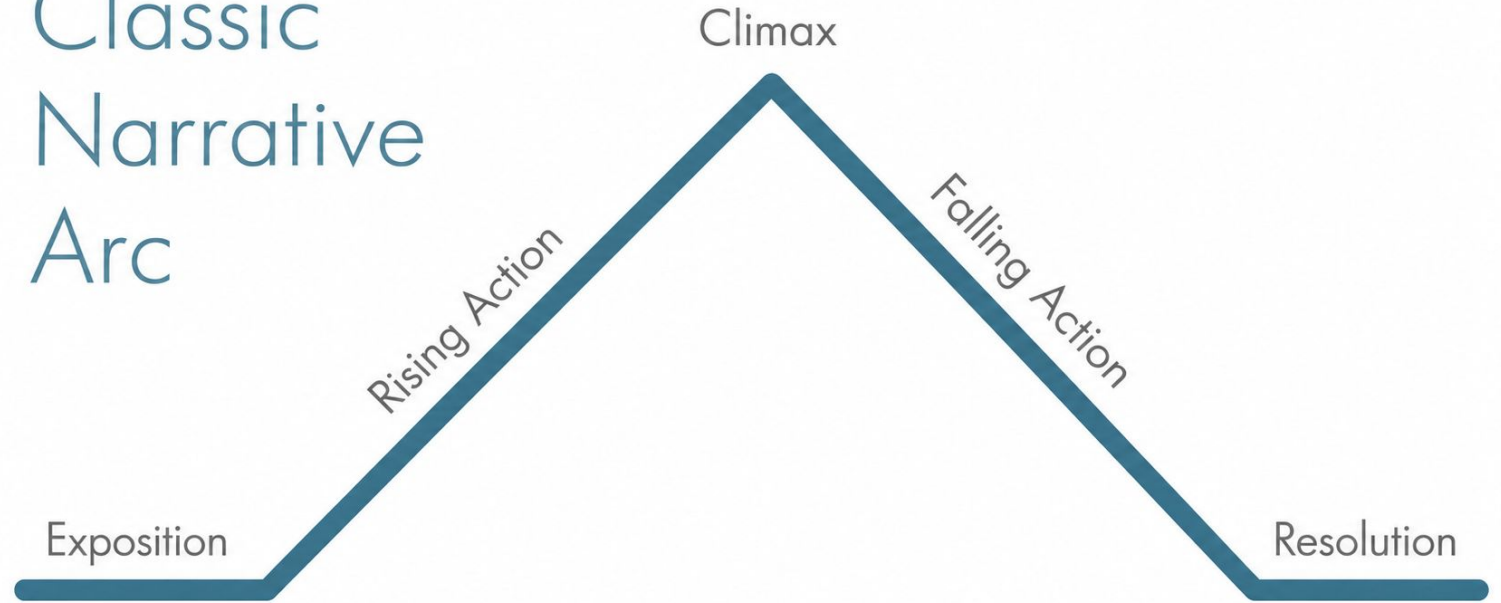
Stay visible after landfall

3

Prevent information vacuums

Who Controls the Narrative?

Classic
Narrative
Arc



- **Narrative authority is distributed**
- **Trust is negotiated across actors**
- **Collaboration matters more than control**

“Now I Take This Seriously

Recent storms can reset attention — but ambiguity still lets people opt out.

REGENCY

People pay closer attention after direct storm experience.

APATHY

Audiences may still think: “It won’t happen to me.”

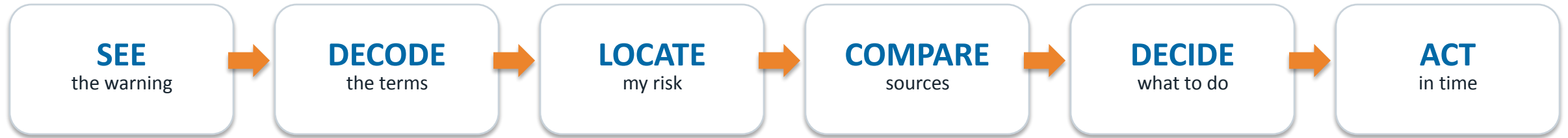
AMBIGUITY

Unclear messages leave room for self-exemption.

Message crafting goal: close the “this applies to someone else” gap.

Attention Is Not Comprehension

During a threat, people are decoding risk under stress.



**If the message takes too much work to understand,
people may delay, dismiss, or wait for another source.**

What is one weather
term, phrase, or message
people often
misunderstand?

Jargon slows action
Visuals can mislead
People cross-check to make sense

Craft for Local Meaning

Move from hazard description to decision support.

LESS USEFUL

Heavy rainfall expected.

Prepare now.

Outside the cone ≠ safe.



MORE ACTIONABLE

Low-lying roads may flood before sunset.

Charge phones, fill prescriptions, and move vehicles by noon.

Your county may still see flooding, tornadoes, and power outages.

Name the hazard → localize the impact → state the next action

Resilient Messages Do Two Things

They preserve agency under stress.

1 Tell the hard truth

Be direct about danger

Avoid vague reassurance

Name what could happen

2 Show the next doable step

State the action

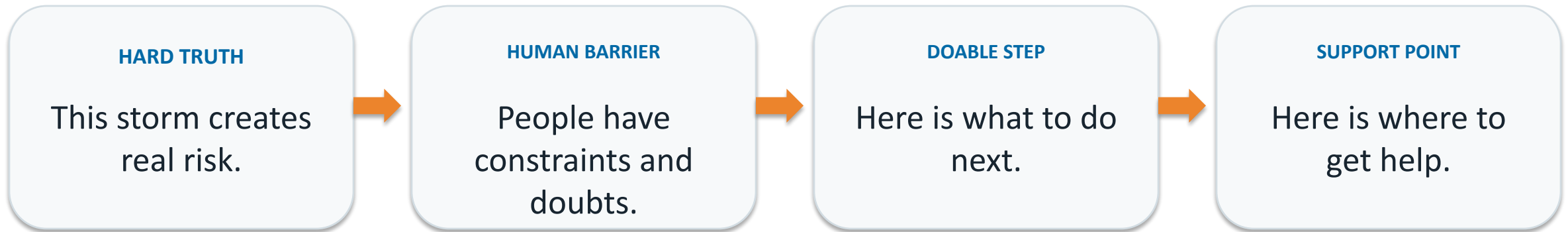
Address the barrier

Connect to support

SERIOUSNESS + EFFICACY = RESILIENT ACTION

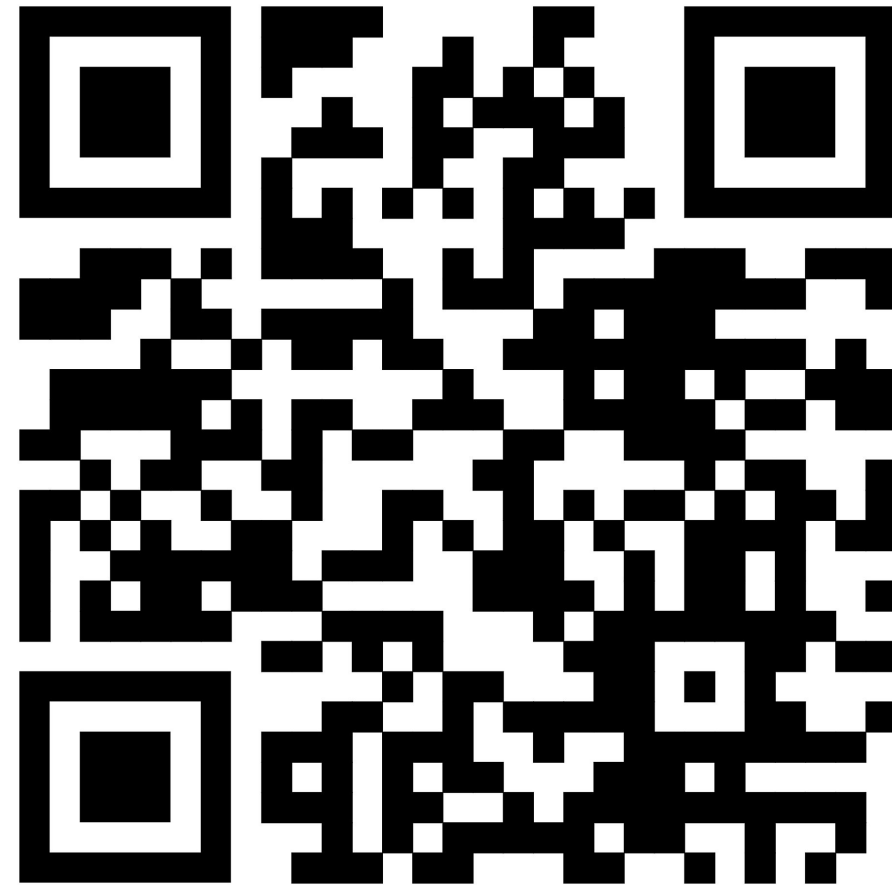
Use Narrative as Efficacy

Not a storytelling flourish: a message-development strategy.

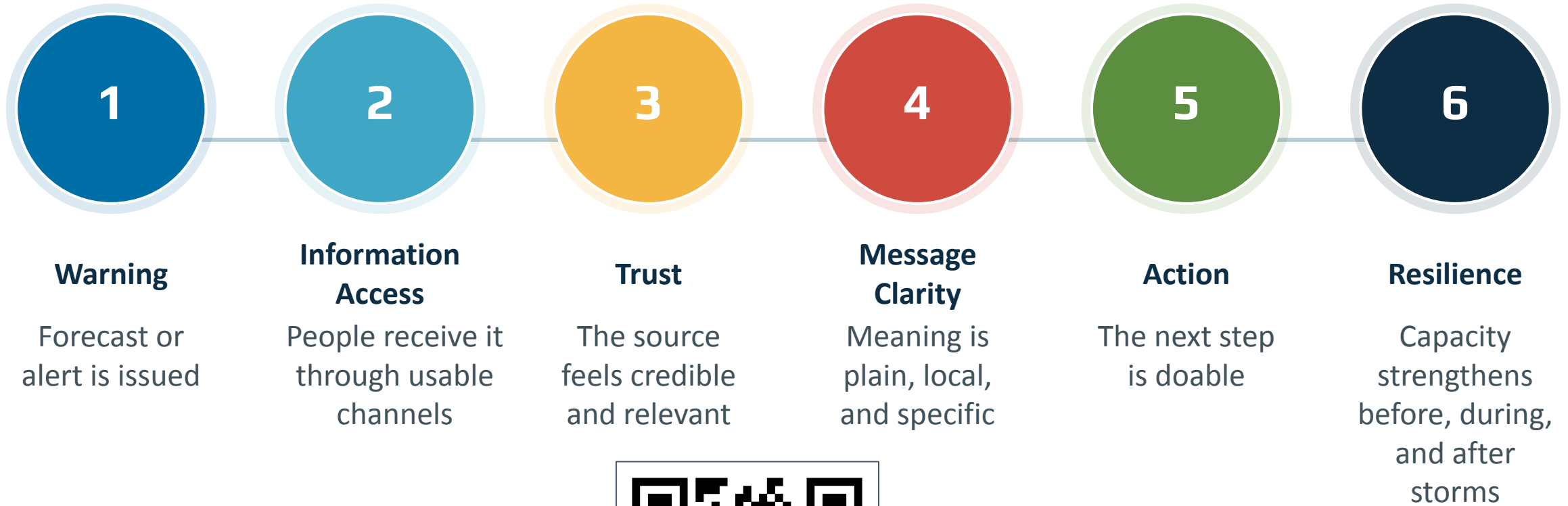


Clarity is resilience infrastructure.

A clear message helps people see risk, keep agency, and act through the systems already around them.



The Warning-to-Action Chain



Thank you



Elizabeth Ray | eray@fsu.edu
Ryan Truchelut | ryan@weathertiger.com
Marcia Mardis | mmardis@fsu.edu
Mildred Perreault | perreaultm@usf.edu