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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flood Warning Systems Save Lives during Colorado Floods

Folsom, California September 24, 2013 — Nearly 40 years ago, more than 140 people lost their lives and 150 more were injured in a devastating flash flood in the Big Thompson Canyon during Colorado's Centennial Weekend. Last week, epic flooding returned to Colorado's Front Range, striking a 200-mile stretch of mountain canyons and communities from Colorado Springs to Fort Collins. Boulder and nearby communities were the hardest hit.

Sadly, officials report seven confirmed fatalities. Three more people are missing and presumed dead. Damages to homes, businesses, and infrastructure are severe. But while these losses are tragic, history has proven that they could have been far worse.

What was different this time?

Fundamentally, the region simply committed to a different outcome.

Since 1976, Front Range communities have improved floodplain management policy and invested in flood control structures, public education, emergency preparedness, and flood warning system technologies; the latter providing up-to-the-minute information needed to trigger effective flood response.

Today, more than 230 rainfall and water level gages stand sentinel along the Front Range; instantly reporting changing storm conditions to emergency managers.

From September 9-16, 2013, the region's rain and stream gages were up to the task; automatically reporting on the developing storm. These gages with other tools, such as National Weather Service's Doppler radar and satellite imagery, helped officials precisely track the most dangerous conditions. Emergency managers used the information to warn threatened neighborhoods and initiate life-saving evacuations.

Early warnings and evacuations are now credited for saving hundreds of lives last week in Colorado — all because local communities invested in a different result.

Today hundreds of communities across the country have local flood warning systems. Many more are needed.

The National Hydrologic Warning Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to assisting emergency and environmental management officials. Our members provide expert advice on the use of real-time, high quality hydrologic information from automated remote data systems. Protecting lives, property and the environment is our goal.

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