

June 15, 2007

NOAA/NWS  
1325 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3283

To whom it may concern:

Although the satellite-based NOAAport distribution system is generally very reliable, outages can occur due to unforeseen circumstances. A good example of this was the outage that occurred on April 21-22, 2007 when interference interrupted SBN data uplink for an extended period of time. The result of this interference was a loss of a significant portion of the data delivered in real-time to the US research and educational community.

Of great significance during this outage was the lack of tornado warnings to that portion of the public that did not have access to the NOAA All-Hazards radio (during the outage, a tornado outbreak occurred in Texas). In addition, many media outlets lacked warnings and severe weather statements during the outage. The frequent, incorrectly used phrase "it came without warning" became true in this case – despite forecaster-issued warnings that were otherwise very timely – for storm chasers in the field who were watching the events of that day unfold. Because there is no way for the non-operational community to recover data from the NWS Telecommunications Gateway in real-time, data missed during the outage were completely lost from the near-term archives maintained by many Unidata community member institutions.

Having a landline-based data distribution backup to the SBN would seem to be not only prudent, but potentially of life-saving value. To scientists in the research community, data that would have been lost may contain information that could aid research, improve understanding, and ultimately contribute to more accurate predictions in the future.

With the above in mind, the Unidata User's Committee is respectfully requesting that the NWS consider providing an Internet-based, backup feed of NOAAport-broadcast data to end-users in real-time using Unidata's proven Local Data Manager/Internet Data Distribution (LDM/IDD) technology. This is the same technology that has been adopted by the NWS for use in the real-time collection and dissemination of NEXRAD Level II radar and NCEP high-resolution model data. The 4.5+ GB of radar and model data available in these datastreams is being made available in real-time to over 40 research and educational institutions in the Unidata community and even more broadly outside of the Unidata community.

Best regards,

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