

Professional Development: A Lifetime of Learning, Growth, and Greater Impact

The word “professional” means to “...engage in an activity as a means of livelihood or gain, whereas “development” refers to “...the act or process of developing; progress”. Together that means that “professional development” occurs when people are engaged in a worthwhile activity and getting better or making progress every day to improve themselves or those around them. The on-line encyclopedia Wikipedia says that professional development refers to “...skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees and formal coursework to conferences and informal learning opportunities.” Professional development can also be described as intensive and collaborative and should incorporate an evaluative stage. The variety of approaches to professional development in concept and practice make this a challenging activity to not only describe but to put to use. To meet this challenge, the Professional Development Committee has developed this vision: *“Members of all NWA disciplines always learning from each other to provide and employ the most effective professional tools and techniques that make a significant and positive impact on producing world class operational environmental products and services.”*

Our calling to meet the NWA mission, “supporting and promoting excellence in operational meteorology and related activities”, is a noble one and worth our efforts to enhance our professionalism -- there are no shortcuts. In fact, to advance weather forecasting as an applied science requires years of continuing education and training. We’ve seen major advances in development, education and training across all parts of our profession. For example, the Cooperative Program for Operational Meteorology, Education and Training (COMET) uses residence and on-line courses, and other training offerings to promote career development. Other continuing education and training opportunities exist through conferences or other meeting participation, review of formal and informal publications, and formal and informal education and training opportunities available to each one of us through our employers, or on our own initiative. It is vital that each one of us strive to become better at our profession by asking questions and working to learn more. This learning can then be applied in our various jobs to advance our profession and improve service to our customers. One way that we hope to help is through our new informational web offering. Feel free to check out <http://www.nwas.org/committees/professionaldevelopment/index.php> at your earliest opportunity. We would welcome your feedback, comments, and suggestions.

The Professional Development Committee will be publishing regular articles on professional development opportunities, informational pieces and tips in our newsletter that we hope will enhance the way we conduct and go about our business. However, we need your help. Please provide your ideas, tips, techniques, and, most importantly, your experiences in the form of short testimonials that highlight beneficial examples of professional development. Please contact me at kcarey@noblis.org, if you have suggestions, ideas and any other feedback.

*Ken Carey
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