EARTH: How Sandy Changed Storm Warnings

Alexandria, VA – Superstorm Sandy slammed against the U.S. Eastern Seaboard in October 2012, inundating iconic communities. Those communities have been rebuilding since then and things are almost back to normal for most. But something else has had to be rebuilt as well: the structured procedures for issuing warnings. The goal is to help communities better comprehend what natural disasters will bring their doorsteps.

In an October feature story, EARTH Magazine untangles the complexities scientists faced to motivate local residents to pack up and move. The rigid definition of what type of storm Sandy was when it made landfall limited which officials could issue warnings and which warnings they could issue. This situation was further complicated by human psychology — different warning agencies have different clout with the general public, and the general public’s past experiences shaped the expectations of millions that the looming danger would blow over like many storms in historical memory.

Not only was Sandy “a perfect storm,” but the conditions to communicate valuable life-saving information were too. EARTH Magazine examines how scientists rose to the occasion despite their circumstances and how they have developed new tools to protect the public during future storms: http://bit.ly/16oK0yg. EARTH Magazine also brings you screaming volcanoes, the possibility of greener gold extraction and a striking view of Wyoming’s Devil’s Tower at the digital bookstand www.earthmagazine.org/digital.

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