

## **Ham Radio and the National Hurricane Center**

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Ham Radio Operators are an integral part of operations at the National Hurricane Center. This presentation will provide an introduction into who WX4NHC is and what they do at the National Hurricane Center. This will include the different communications modes and networks used, including Hurricane Watch Net, Local Skywarn Nets and others. WX4NHC operates as a backup emergency communications system at NHC. But, Ham Radio Operators do not act merely as a communication tool for forecasters. They also provide important surface reports, using various methods and equipment. Finally, we will discuss how Ham Radio Operators and non-Hams can help the NHC during hurricanes. A couple of short video segments will be shown to illustrate what WX4NHC does at the National Hurricane Center.

### **PRESENTER'S BIO**

**Julio Ripoll** is a Licensed Architect specializing in Healthcare Facilities and Laboratory design. Ripoll is a consulting Architect for the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine for the past 15 years, designing over 300 projects on and off campus, including all of the satellite clinics for nationally recognized Bascom Palmer Eye Institute. Ripoll is a member of the American Institute of Architects and the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.

He graduated from the University of Miami in 1981. He is proud to be a "Hurricane Alumni." Ripoll holds an Amateur Radio "Extra Class" FCC License "WD4R" and was first licensed in 1976 as "WD4JNS" and then "WD4JR" in the 1990s.

Julio Ripoll was born in Matanzas, Cuba and immigrated to the U.S. when he was 5 years old, with his family in 1961. Ripoll is very proud to be an American citizen. He lived in Dallas, TX in the 1960s and moved to Miami, FL in 1964. His first memorable experience with hurricanes was in 1965, at the impressionable age of 9, when Hurricane Betsy made landfall over South Florida and tore a large gaping crack in the roof of their small wooden house and the wind and rain poured in for hours in the darkness. The noise and the damaged neighborhood are his most vivid memories.

Ripoll's first Hurricane Communications activity was as a volunteer for Miami-Dade Civil Defense and for the American Red Cross during Hurricane David in 1979. In 1980 he helped co-found the Amateur Radio Station at the National Hurricane Center "W4EHW" (now known as WX4NHC) and was appointed as the first Amateur Radio Coordinator. For the first couple of hurricane seasons, Ripoll would hand carry the Radio equipment and a wire antenna from the University of Miami's Club station in a cardboard box, across US-1, and install it at one of the Hurricane Forecaster's desks -- for each hurricane. The WX4NHC Team started with 3 operators in 1980 and now has 33 specially trained operators that operate 3-hour shifts and that have been active for over 80 hurricanes. Ripoll has served under six NHC Directors as a volunteer for the past 29 years and is currently the Assistant Amateur Radio Coordinator.

Julio married his high school sweetheart, Susan (KA4UVI) and they have one son, Jason (W4JRR). His other interests are SCUBA diving and photography.