

WARNING DECISION TRAINING BRANCH

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Warning Decision Training Branch (<http://www.wdtb.noaa.gov>) develops and delivers training on the integrated elements of the warning process within a National Weather Service forecast office. Part of the National Weather Service Continuous Learning Division, the WDTB training activities provide basic and advanced WSR-88D operator proficiency, with an emphasis on the integrated data environment, warning methodology and situation awareness. The WDTB's goal is to increase expertise among NWS personnel in order to better serve the public in warning situations.

Radar Training

The WDTB was established in 1989. With the nationwide implementation of the NEXRAD program, NWS management formed a unique training group designed to create and teach a course dedicated to the understanding and application of the WSR-88D radar. At that time, the organization was called the Operations Training Facility (OTF) with the instructor core referred to as the NEXRAD Training Unit (NTU). The facility was originally part of the NWS Forecast Office in Norman, Okla., and thus was administered by the Southern Region of the NWS. The first Operations Course was taught in the fall of 1990.

When the next classes were taught a year later, the NTU had become the Operations Training Branch (OTB) and was transferred to the rapidly growing NEXRAD Operational Support Facility (now the Radar Operations Center).

For seven years, the OTB provided WSR-88D radar training in Norman to a total of 2,525 students from the National Weather Service and Department of Defense were taught by 48 NWS and DoD instructors. In 1998, the OTB was awarded the Department of Commerce Bronze Medal for the development and delivery of the WSR-88D Operations Course. The course had been recognized by NWS employees as an example of training done right in the NWS Modernization.

Distance Learning

In the fall of 2000, the NWS reorganization officially changed OTB to the Warning Decision Training Branch and administratively moved the branch out of the Radar Operations Center into the new Continuous Learning Division of the Office of Climate, Water and Weather Services. The operations course continues, with much of the material presented via teletraining, and other distance learning techniques, in addition to one-week workshops. Additionally, advance workshops on various topics remain a main staple of the WDTB, including Warning Decision Making and Winter Weather Workshops. The content of these workshops no longer focuses on radar data alone, but the integrated environment including science, technology and human factors aspects of the forecasters warning decision. The concepts taught for years in these workshops are now being folded into a new course, the Advanced Warning Operations Course.