

Does the Weather Drive You CRAZY?

by Wayne G. Mahar

Wine Festivals, Heart Walks, outdoor sporting events, The Academy Awards, even garage sales all have one thing in common...concern about the weather. Generally, the better the weather, the better the turnout, and most important for the event organizers, the more money is made. Yes, more money is made from larger crowds, but the quality and profit of the event is also affected by not having to rent expensive tenting or having to revert to Plan B, using less desirable weather back up plans.

But hey, it's the weather! It's Mother Nature! What are you going to do?

Remember the old saying... "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." Well let me tell you, this weather saying needs to be changed because some folks are doing something about the weather for your event. Despite this being 2011, nobody has figured out how to control the weather yet, but there is a way to better "plan" around the weather with a more accurate and personalized forecast.

The United States and Canada do have their own nationwide, government run weather services, who generally do a good job at just that, "generalized" forecasts for large geographical areas. Most countries worldwide have these types of government sponsored weather services, available to the public free of charge. And, in this day and age, if you want a forecast, just check the internet or turn on the TV to your national TV weather networks. Weather information is all over the place and it costs nothing. If you have an event and can live with a forecast of "30% chance for rain today," great! More power to you. But, if a 30% chance of rain just isn't good enough and you need more specific details, you need times of rain, exact temperatures, a forecast pinpointed to your exact event location, more lead time (a forecast 10 days or more in



advance before your event begins), AND your own meteorologist always only a phone call away, none of these previously mentioned weather sources will help you make that critical, "money on the line" decision. What you need is a private weather service!

A private weather service works only for you and your event! No generalized forecasts covering large geographical areas. Private forecasts pinpoint your exact location and take into consideration your events proximity to bodies of water, hills and any other local effects. Forecasts are detailed hour by hour, updated as needed (not just at set times like most other forecasts), and if you have questions or concerns, you have your own meteorologist available 24/7, only a phone call away. All of this means you have a forecast that is not only MORE accurate, but more dependable and more useful! Private forecasting firms work for YOU and YOUR event! They build their reputation on being more accurate than anything else available.

At this point you are probably asking yourself, "How can they do this?" and "Is there really that much of a difference between the forecasts I get for free and a private weather service?" The answer is a definite yes! There IS a big difference. The fact is this. The primary concern for most government weather services is essentially to "Alert the general public of severe, life threatening weather," and they generally do a good job at it. That is the most important thing they do. The "general, public forecasts they provide most media each and every day is not their primary task. For a private weather service however, getting YOUR forecast of rain or temperatures or wind IS the primary task!

What makes the difference in the quality of forecasting? First, know that meteorologists worldwide all begin with the same, basic weather data i.e.: satellite, radar, computer models etc. So how can the forecast be that much more accurate? Another great question! Here's how. Private forecasters, besides knowing the exact location and topography for your event, have also spoken with you and know what your primary concerns are. Knowing this, they can more readily "be on the lookout" for these specific weather elements for you. And here's another huge difference. The time spent on a forecast. Private meteorological firms spend a great deal of time on just YOUR event forecast. They don't have to worry about forecasting for 15 zones covering 10,000 square miles. That "pin point analysis and forecasting" accounts for greater accuracy and more detail, and a forecast that helps you plan with and around the weather and allows your event to go more smoothly.

More precise and detailed forecasting like this can also be used for other aspects of managing and planning events. For instance, if you knew a week or more in advance that it would be unseasonably chilly for your event, maybe this advanced warning might have you cutting back on ice cream but stepping up your supply of warmer foods and drinks. On the other hand, if you knew it would be unseasonably hot and humid, you could increase cold drinks, ice cream and popsicles.

If you knew it would be wet for much of your event, then besides moving some of the festivities inside and ordering tenting, you might find having umbrellas and rain-coats for sale could be a money maker.

What about your event advertising and promotion? Money spent worthwhile OR money down the drain? The public hears the chance for rain in the forecast and they think your event will be a wash out. Don't let them think that! Beat them to the punch. Gear your advertising to the weather ahead of time so they know your event is still going on, is weather proofed and still plenty of fun!

Now keep in mind, weather forecasting is an inexact science! It is one of the few jobs that involves predicting the future. Simply and honestly put, there are bound to be times when something changes, and that's where updates come in. One of the only other jobs I can think of that involves predicting the future on a regular basis is a stock broker or investment counselor, and all we have to do is think about the past few years and you can decide for yourself how accurate that information has been.

True event weather stories, or Tales of event stress! You decide.

Hillary Harris, renowned and award winning Director of Special Events for Warner Brothers in Los Angeles, had a particularly "trying" experience with the weather last year. A giant outdoor event with tens of thousands of dollars on the line, and rain was in the forecast. The easiest thing to do would have simply been to cancel the event, but that was the last thing Hillary or the client wanted to do.

So Hillary called to get some more precise private weather forecasting going. Nobody can tell this story better than Hillary herself, and she does just this in her blog "Hill on Hollywood" at this link: <http://www.hillonhollywood.com/> (Scroll down to her entry of May 10, 2011 entitled "It never rains in California.")

Can you feel her angst and stress while she tells her story? I am sure many of you can "feel her pain."

The weather can certainly play a big part in weddings too. Prime example, a high profile Hollywood actress had her wedding in Ojai, California earlier this

year. The "public/online/national TV" forecast had simply "30% chance for rain." If your son or daughter has a soccer game scheduled for Saturday morning, it's not that big of a deal. But, if you are famous and have a lavish outdoor wedding and reception planned that takes all week to set up for, a forecast of 30% chance for rain just doesn't cut it.

In a situation like this, not only were more precise and detailed forecasts sent out daily well in advance of set up, but on the wedding day, meteorologists were in communication with the wedding planner, in this case Yifat Oren of Yifat Oren & Associates <http://yifatoren.com/>. Yifat and her expert team of wedding planners were on site and they received weather and doppler radar briefings every hour. Try getting that type of service off the internet or television!

So, how about your next outdoor event? Is the weather "tricky" in your event location? Are you confident in a weather forecast that calls for 30% chance for rain? Can you call someone and chat about your weather concerns? If these important questions leave you uneasy, then maybe you should check out private weather forecasting and see the difference for yourself.

Wayne Mahar is the President of Precision Weather Service, a private weather consulting firm based in Syracuse, NY. Precision Weather Service is the leader in specialized weather services for all types of events including whose clients include most Hollywood/LA movie studios and the largest NYC and LA based event companies. Some of our clients and credits include The Academy Awards, Grammy's, Golden Globes, Cannes Film Festival, Sundance Film Festival, NBA All Star Game, MTV Spring Break, 2010 AHL Outdoor hockey game, hundreds of movie premieres and parties through DREAMWORKS/Paramount, NBC-Universal, Warner Brothers, BestEvents LA, ELS Lights, CynFull Productions, RelativityMedia, Silver Birches, and Yifat Oren & Associates and famous Hollywood weddings.

Be sure to visit us at the IFEA annual convention in Fort Worth in October and register at our booth to win FREE EVENT FORECASTING.

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