



*AMS Presidents (left to right): Franco Einaudi (2006), Rick Anthes (2007) and Walt Dabberdt (2008) at work on a Habitat for Humanity house building project in New Orleans.*

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## AMS President 2008: **looking back**

*A brief personal retrospective on the American Meteorological Society's year 2008, including some of the many highlights.*

The American Meteorological Society (AMS) began 2008 in New Orleans with the 88th Annual Meeting where we witnessed firsthand the sobering experience of a city still devastated by the ravages of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Apart from attending technical sessions on hurricane observations, forecasting and mitigation, some of us had the privilege of

working with Habitat for Humanity to help provide new housing to the residents of the city's Upper Fifth Ward. It was a signal occasion we will never forget. The year ended exploring a very different set of issues: those resulting from convergence of changing population demographics, the growth of the world's cities, and global warming as we convened in

the Desert Southwest for the 89th Annual Meeting in Phoenix. As AMS President, I presided over an intervening 12 months that were filled with a great many accomplishments—and challenges.

Thanks to the generosity of many individual, corporate (including Vaisala) and institutional members, AMS was able to award last year

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alone 59 graduate and undergraduate fellowships and scholarships totaling more than \$500,000. This is a great investment in our science, the Society, and our future. Presenting their awards and talking with many of these bright, energetic and enthusiastic students was a personal highlight of the Phoenix meeting.

One of the principal tasks of the Scientific and Technical Activities Commission (STAC) is to organize the many specialty conferences that attracted more than 6000 participants last year. The STAC is now comprised of 31 Boards and Committees with more than 300 members. It's traditional for the AMS President to attend many of these conferences, which gave me the opportunity to go to meetings outside of my own specialty areas and to interact with many experts in such topical areas as mountain meteorology, agricultural and forest meteorology, weather modification, broadcast meteorology, turbulence, and tropical meteorology.

Under the leadership of the Publications Commission, AMS publishes 10 scholarly journals and the AMS Bulletin. In 2008, AMS published an all-time record 29,348 pages, and we announced a new scholarly journal, *Weather, Climate, and Society*, that will publish its first issue late in 2009.

The past year has seen record numbers of applications — and certifications — for broadcast meteorologists and consulting meteorologists; these certifications serve to raise the competency bar for practitioners in both of these important areas. Currently, there are 297 Certified Broadcast Meteorologists (CBM) and 314 active Certified Consulting Meteorologists. The AMS TV Seal program was discontinued at the end of 2008 in favor of the CBM program,

and there remain 652 active TV Seal Holders with more than 200 Seal and CBM applications still in review.

One of the most important and demanding responsibilities of AMS' senior leadership is to oversee the creation of policy and information statements that provide the official AMS position on a wide range of important and sometimes controversial topics. This past year was no exception as we published four new or updated statements dealing with national weather and climate priorities, water resources, probability forecasts, and space weather. Work on new statements on climate geoengineering, radio frequency issues, and the importance of infrastructure were all initiated in 2008 and will be released in 2009 for public review and comment prior to final release later in the year.

At the 2008 New Orleans Annual Meeting, I proposed a new initiative intended to increase interactions among the world's more than sixty meteorological societies. This past January in Phoenix, representatives from 18 societies from North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and Oceania and the World Meteorological Organization participated in a planning meeting to debate the merits of going forward. There it was unanimously agreed to establish an International Forum of Meteorological Societies, or IFMS. This is the first time that an organization of this type and scope has been established within the global meteorological community. AMS can be proud to have spearheaded its formation. A steering committee is in the process of establishing terms of reference and preparing for the first global meeting of the IFMS in January 2010 that will take place in conjunction

with the 90th AMS Annual Meeting in Atlanta. The fundamental goal of the IFMS is very basic; to foster and encourage communication and exchange of knowledge, ideas and resources among the world's meteorological societies. A few examples of topics of common concern to IFMS members include: global climate change, impacts of severe natural weather hazards, the rapid evolution of society publications, trends in society membership, and domestic and international outreach.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the AMS members and staff who have made 2008 an incomparable year for me in many ways. It was a unique opportunity to interact with so many dedicated professionals and to make so many new and wonderful acquaintances, all of whom share the common goal of strengthening the Society and the professions it serves. I look forward to continuing those interactions in the years ahead. Equally important and enjoyable was the universal support of Vaisala that allowed me to take on these added responsibilities. The next two years will not be quite devoid of AMS responsibilities as I continue in the role of Past President where I continue to serve on the AMS Council and its Executive Committee. All in all, it's been a great experience that I will forever cherish. I would also like to encourage all who work in some professional capacity in the field of meteorology, oceanography, climate, hydrology or the related sciences to become a member of this unique (and international) organization by exploring [www.ametsoc.org](http://www.ametsoc.org).