

# Actionable warnings

– a joint effort on how to communicate warnings with one voice

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The Norwegian Meteorological Institutes main task is to help secure life and property. Since 2007 and the launch of the weather service Yr, a collaboration between the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) and the Norwegian Meteorological Institute (MET Norway), the focus has been on communicating weather forecasts digitally on the web page and in our apps. Currently Yr has on average roughly nine million unique users on a weekly basis.

Yr's main goal is to make our users ready for all kinds of weather. Yr provides weather forecasts for about 13 million locations world wide, but weather warnings and warnings about natural hazards are, for the time being, limited to Norway. Although Yr has an exceptional outreach, we strive to be better at communicating severe weather conditions and natural hazards. Yr also provides warnings of natural hazards from The Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE) and we collaborate on Varsom to offer warnings on sms or e-mail tailored to the emergency response actors or the public in general. Last year we expanded our collaboration with a joint effort on how to communicate warnings with one voice. Our common goal is that warnings are not only understood, but they are acted on. The question is, do we provide our users with the right skillset to do so?

Each year you hear about tourists that have put themselves in danger by skiing a mountain where avalanches might occur, or just by visiting one of the many tourist attractions in Norway and not being prepared. For some of them, the outcome has been deadly. We have also had accidents where children have been injured or died. All deaths are tragic, and we need to ensure that warnings from Yr and Varsom are received, understood and acted upon, so that we can prevent accidents.

One of the conclusions in our pre-study was that we do not know enough about how users relate to warnings and what they do to prevent potential accidents or damages. We also realized that we don't have the expertise to analyze what users act upon (behavioral psychology) and we have little resources on service design. To achieve that we decided to apply for a governmental funding initiative to support projects in public innovation, called Stimulab. Stimulab granted us the support and helped us to find the consulting agencies that we partnered up with, Halogen, Agenda Kaupang and Knowit. The consulting agencies, led by Halogen, have worked together with us on this project that began last year and lasts throughout this year.

We know from experience that visual communication and clear language are key ingredients for a message to reach the public. Our outreach is exceptional and diverse, both in our services and in social and traditional media. Both MET Norway and NVE have made changes to how weather warnings are communicated, the focus has shifted from solely describing the weather or natural hazard to enhancing possible consequences for the end-user. The change is good, but we now have to master the way we communicate it.

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