

WEATHER DECISION TECHNOLOGIES (WDT)

Forecast: Growth

Weather Decision Technologies specializes in life-saving data

Let's say a storm is brewing in southwest Oklahoma. Lightning flashes. Clouds are spinning. A tornado warning is issued.

Now the challenge becomes quickly communicating the warning to hundreds of thousands of Oklahomans who may be living and working in the tornado's path.

Norman-based Weather Decision Technologies (WDT) owns patented technology that alerts users of warnings using its innovative capabilities within seconds of the imminent threat.

"If a large city is in a tornado warning, we can send a million alerts out in 22 seconds," said Michael Eilts, WDT's co-founder and CEO. "That's all based upon our patented capability."

In fact, WDT has been issued six patents since it was founded 17 years ago, three of which focus on how fast it can send alerts.

Founded in 2000 by Eilts and three other weather research veterans on the OU campus, Weather Decision Technologies today employs 85 people, including 79 at its Norman headquarters. Thirty-one of them possess master's – or Ph.D. – level degrees.

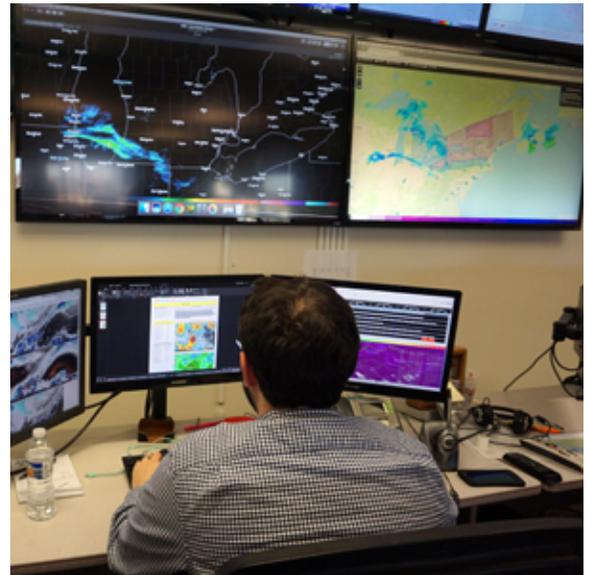
As an industry-leading provider of weather-related projects, WDT offers expertise that applies to hazardous weather detection and prediction, forecast modeling, analytics, mobile apps and interactive mapping. Its worldwide customer base includes oil and gas industry clients, agriculture, marine, health care and data scientists.

For Oklahoma, WDT is a high-paying employer that brings millions of dollars in revenue annually into the state. Only 5 percent of its income is generated in Oklahoma, while 15 percent comes from international clients and 80 percent from the continental United States.

"WDT is a local company; it has grown here and has added \$350 million in wealth effect to the state of Oklahoma over the 17 years of our lifetime," Eilts said. "I think that creates a huge value in Norman and Oklahoma."

WDT markets its own weather products to businesses or sells them as branded apps directly to consumers. Its RadarScope app on the Apple App Store has 500,000 users who paid \$9.99 to download the app onto their smartphones.

"We have 85 television stations around the United States that use our apps," Eilts said. "Basically, they say, 'hey, this is our app,' but it's actually WDT's app with their logo on it."



WDT's early growth was aided by Oklahoma grants and investment. It received a \$300,000 grant through the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST) in 2001 that helped it license technology from OU and hire early employees.

It also participated in the OCAST Intern Partnerships, a program that allowed it to bring in interns on a cost-shared basis.

"WDT has returned the state's investment many times over in both the number of people it employs and the revenue it brings into Oklahoma," said C. Michael Carolina, OCAST executive director. "We're proud of the impact their weather expertise has throughout the world."

Another factor in WDT's growth has been the large weather industry presence on the OU campus, Eilts said. More than 1,200 people work in the weather industry in Norman.

The National Severe Storms Laboratory is located right across the street from WDT on OU's South Research campus.

"One of the key things for WDT is that we have been a leading tech company in the industry for a long, long time," Eilts said. "And the reason for that is we are here in Norman, OK, on the South Research Campus. We have friends over there. We license technology from the University of Oklahoma and from the National Severe Storms Laboratory."

Growth opportunities continue to arise for WDT. It recently signed a deal with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines to provide weather information for all 47 of its ships worldwide, helping them stay safe and vector around, for example, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria this past summer.

Renewable energy – wind and solar power – is also a promising area for the company, Eilts said.

WDT maintains an active blog at wdtinc.com, and often hears from users how its products have saved lives and protected property.

For example, WDT's forecasting expertise allowed energy clients to operate longer before Hurricane Harvey plowed through the Gulf of Mexico back in August and then resume operations more quickly.

"Sometimes we get stories from individual people too," Eilts said. "They got an alert from one of our apps and they turned around instead of driving into a tornado. We hear many, many stories about how we save lives, and that gives us a great sense of satisfaction in the value we create at WDT. We are not just building a widget, we are creating and providing information that is used by individuals and businesses to save lives and mitigate risk to business operations."

[Read the article in the 1-19-18 Oklahoman](#)

[Watch the video](#)

[Go to the WDT website](#)