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News & Events

- Education News
- Research News
- Featured News
- Events
- IIHR in the News
- IIHR in the News Archives

News & Events Archive

- [January 2019](#) (1)
- [December 2018](#) (3)
- [November 2018](#) (5)
- [October 2018](#) (6)
- [September 2018](#) (2)
- [August 2018](#) (8)
- [July 2018](#) (4)
- [June 2018](#) (15)
- [May 2018](#) (5)
- [April 2018](#) (6)
- [March 2018](#) (15)
- [February 2018](#) (5)
- [January 2018](#) (6)
- [December 2017](#) (5)
- [November 2017](#) (2)
- [October 2017](#) (8)
- [September 2017](#) (9)
- [August 2017](#) (11)
- [July 2017](#) (10)
- [June 2017](#) (12)
- [May 2017](#) (2)
- [April 2017](#) (18)
- [March 2017](#) (6)
- [February 2017](#) (2)
- [January 2017](#) (2)
- [December 2016](#) (3)
- [November 2016](#) (14)
- [October 2016](#) (5)
- [September 2016](#) (16)
- [August 2016](#) (5)
- [July 2016](#) (12)
- [June 2016](#) (9)
- [May 2016](#) (10)
- [April 2016](#) (11)
- [March 2016](#) (11)
- [February 2016](#) (17)
- [January 2016](#) (17)
- [December 2015](#) (14)
- [November 2015](#) (9)
- [October 2015](#) (22)
- [September 2015](#) (12)
- [August 2015](#) (5)
- [July 2015](#) (11)
- [June 2015](#) (5)
- [May 2015](#) (6)
- [April 2015](#) (8)
- [March 2015](#) (9)
- [February 2015](#) (18)
- [January 2015](#) (5)
- [December 2014](#) (3)
- [November 2014](#) (5)
- [October 2014](#) (15)
- [September 2014](#) (7)
- [August 2014](#) (5)
- [July 2014](#) (7)
- [June 2014](#) (4)
- [May 2014](#) (8)
- [April 2014](#) (10)
- [March 2014](#) (8)
- [February 2014](#) (8)
- [January 2014](#) (5)
- [December 2013](#) (10)
- [November 2013](#) (3)
- [October 2013](#) (6)
- [September 2013](#) (8)
- [August 2013](#) (6)
- [July 2013](#) (11)
- [June 2013](#) (13)
- [May 2013](#) (19)
- [April 2013](#) (7)
- [March 2013](#) (10)
- [February 2013](#) (2)
- [January 2013](#) (1)
- [December 2012](#) (2)
- [November 2012](#) (11)
- [October 2012](#) (5)
- [September 2012](#) (6)
- [August 2012](#) (8)
- [July 2012](#) (3)
- [June 2012](#) (3)
- [May 2012](#) (1)
- [February 2012](#) (2)
- [January 2012](#) (2)
- [December 2011](#) (2)
- [October 2011](#) (1)
- [August 2011](#) (4)
- [June 2011](#) (3)
- [May 2011](#) (4)
- [April 2011](#) (1)
- [January 2011](#) (3)
- [May 2010](#) (3)

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Demir Wins Microsoft's 'AI for Earth' Grant

Posted on December 11th, 2017

Ibrahim Demir of the Iowa Flood Center (IFC) at the University of Iowa (UI) has been awarded a grant from Microsoft as part of its "AI for Earth" program. Dr. Demir is an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering who also leads the [Hydroinformatics Lab](#) at the University of Iowa. He will use the award to develop "Flood AI," an artificial intelligence system that serves as a virtual flood expert (similar to Siri). Flood AI is accessible through many smart devices, including smartphones, chat applications such as Skype, smart home devices, and more. Users can ask Flood AI any flood or weather related question and get a quick answer.



The Iowa Flood Center's Ibrahim Demir has develop a new artificial intelligence system for flood information.

It's like talking to a friend who happens to be a flood expert, Demir says.

AI for Earth is a Microsoft program aimed at empowering people and organizations to solve global environmental challenges by increasing access to AI tools and educational opportunities, while accelerating innovation. Via the Azure for Research AI for Earth award program, Microsoft provides selected researchers and organizations access to its cloud and AI computing resources to accelerate, improve, and expand work on climate change, agriculture, biodiversity, and/or water challenges.

Demir is among the first recipients of AI for Earth, which launched in July 2017 after a competitive and selective grant process. Microsoft awarded the grants in recognition of the potential of the work and power of AI to accelerate progress.

"Ibrahim's work is part of the foundation of the Iowa Flood Center's service to Iowans," says IFC Director Witold Krajewski. "He is the chief architect of the Iowa Flood Information System, which puts the IFC's innovative flood-related tools and information in the hands of all Iowans."

The Iowa Flood Center is based at IIHR—Hydroscience & Engineering, a UI research institute focused on fluids engineering. IIHR Interim Director Gabriele Villarini says Demir's work is on the cutting edge of hydroinformatics — the art and science of providing data and information directly to users through online systems. "Ibrahim continues to break new ground," Villarini says. "His work directly serves Iowans by providing the real-time information they need to make informed decisions when flooding occurs."

When flood events happen, people need information — no matter what the time of day or night. Demir says that Flood AI—available 24 hours a day—will be like talking to a friend who happens to be an expert on flooding. Flood AI will support the Iowa Flood Center's mission to provide flood-related information and technology that is immediately useful to Iowans.

To date, Microsoft has distributed more than 35 grants to qualifying researchers and organizations around the world. Today, [Microsoft announced](#) its intent to put \$50 million over five years into the program, enabling grant-making and educational training at a much larger scale.

More information about AI for Earth can be found on the website: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/aiforearth>