



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

Agency revives CONOPS plan

(June 29, 2012) NWSEO has discovered an internal document from Agency leadership that outlines a National Weather Service Concept of Operations (CONOPS) for the future. The plans would reduce staff and consolidate weather forecast offices. NWSEO is trying to ascertain how serious the agency is about implementing the ideas in this document.

“The plans are ill-conceived. You can’t eliminate 25 percent of the workforce - a quarter of the people involved in life-saving forecasts - and expect the same level of service,” said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. “This is a plan that appeals to the pocketbook but doesn’t get to the heart of the matter. If the National Weather Service plans on continuing its life saving mission – they better have people in place when the weather gets rough.”

Below is the information in the plans. NWSEO will continue to represent the dedicated employees at weather forecast offices and throughout the NWS. You can log on to www.nwseo.org for continued information, developments and the union’s work to keep our members employed. The NWSEO Facebook group will also involve discussions on these efforts.

Personnel

1) Define an agency Concept of operations - one which maximizes the role of our local offices to provide IDSS, and local warning services, and one where the national centers maximize their role on production of the Common Operating Picture.

WFO Business Model Change

This proposed business model maintains the Weather Ready Nation concepts promoted in the NWS Strategic plan while reducing redundancies of operations.

1. Transfer routine gridded forecasting responsibilities to a national center, or a small number of consolidated regional centers. Responsible for regional-to-local value-added forecasts for NOAA Common Operational Picture. Staffed 24x 7.
2. WFO DSS Operations for multiple offices can be consolidated into one office –look at a 2 to 1 ratio to start. Staff savings - 15 forecasters can manage DSS operations for the geographic area of the 2 offices in place of the 20 we have today (10 in each office).
 - a. WFO forecasters focus on DSS operations –this includes warning operations, short term digital forecast updates and working with our partners.

- b. For offices where operations are moved into the consolidated WFO, the office is open part time with community liaison (WCM?) and ET staff.
 - c. Maintain OPL position to manage the Cooperative Observer program – but covering the larger area of the consolidated WFO.
 - d. Reduce number of SOOs as new consolidated offices will need a smaller cadre.
 - e. Eliminate requirement for 2 people on shift at many offices
3. Redesign the forecaster intern program to advance to the GS-12 forecaster position without need to move. Some HMT positions will be converted to intern positions, and some others converted to intern and moved to offices with a higher DSS workload (no more cookie cutter)
 4. Consolidate RFCs into the National Water Center. NWC will provide forecasts to WFOs for distribution and DSS. RFCs would maintain a small group of 3-5 hydrologists locally for DSS and coordination with USACE/USGS. Office staffing requirement reduction of at least 25% over current RFC staffing.

Possible savings: 25% reduction in forecaster/intern positions. 25-50% reduction in SOOs? Maintain MIC, WCM and ET staff

National Center Business Model

1. Consolidate SPC, AWC and HPC operations to reduce redundancies
2. OPC and HPC can also be consolidated.
3. Reengineer tsunami warning mission
 - a. Warnings from NCEP center for Atlantic and Pacific basins
 - b. Local warnings and education & outreach from AK, HI, West Coast, and PR

Possible savings: Up to 25% fewer staff needed at consolidated national centers