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## **Agency engages in a wave of bad-faith bargaining at the National Tsunami Warning Center**

(February 27, 2015) NWS management is refusing to bargain over changes at the National Tsunami Warning Center regardless of its obligation and repeated promises to do so. When NWSEO originally filed an Unfair Labor Practice, regarding this violation – the agency promised to negotiate if the ULP was pulled. NWSEO pulled the ULP only to have the agency, once again, refuse to bargain. NTWC employees are working in tight quarters and new construction within the building is closing in an already cramped space. The following details illustrate NWS management’s lack of concern for employees’ working conditions and explains why a second ULP has been filed by NWSEO.

The NTWC is a small facility, designed to house ten employees when it was built in 2002. The current staff is nearly double that number. Installation of the AWIPS II computer hardware system and components will require an additional approximate 400 square feet of space in this already cramped building.

In 2012, an architectural engineering firm hired by the NWS evaluated several options for installing the computer hardware and clearly advised against the only option that would not add space. The firm cited the lack of expansion space would be detrimental to the computer equipment and would also require a downsizing in staff due to space constraints.

“This option would require a significant reduction in staff or an elimination of essential features of this building. With proposed increases in staff, this option becomes more unworkable.”

In March 2013, the NTWC Director gave a copy of the report to the NTWC steward. The steward provided management with several proposals based on the architectural engineers’ recommendations and was told that the agency would fund a 600 foot expansion. However, the construction did not take place and more than a year later, the NWS changed their plans without formal notification to NWSEO, deciding instead to proceed with the very option that their own experts advised against – the plan to reconfigure existing space to house the computer hardware system.

In November 2014, disregarding previous agreements, the NWS moved ahead to reconfigure the existing space of the NTWC and started building a 370 square foot computer room in the

center of the facility. NWSEO General Counsel Richard Hirn promptly drafted an Unfair Labor Practice with National Labor Relations Authority.

A month later, National Labor Management representatives admitted to NWSEO that the NWS was in error to begin construction at the NTWC before bargaining was complete. They asked NWSEO to drop the ULP and agreed to negotiate nationally on the issue. They assured NWSEO that the construction would be halted in order for negotiations to proceed. Making the effort to bargain in good faith, NWSEO President Sobien dropped the ULP and sent management very clear negotiable proposals. Construction was halted several days after the ULP was filed and after continued reminders by NWSEO Sobien.

In January, management responded that they decided this was a local issue, which they felt they had satisfied during the initial local negotiations (when the expansion was promised), and were moving forward with reconfiguring the small space with no expansion.

NWSEO has filed another Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) citing that management has bargained in bad faith. NWSEO will keep you posted on the outcome of this ULP.

“Every NWS office has its unique set of concerns and issues,” said Sobien. “What’s important is that you are treated fairly and that you work in a suitable environment. Your support of NWSEO enables us to represent your best interest when management no longer takes that into account.”

-NWSEO-

**No one cares more for National Weather Service employees than  
National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than  
National Weather Service employees.  
We are NWSEO.**