



National Weather Service
Employees Organization

NWS Restructure “CONOPS 2016” Talking Points

1. The National Weather Service plans to disseminate your local forecast from national centers diminishing the work of local forecasters and their expertise in how weather patterns factor in to computer models.
2. The NWS is focusing on “consistent” forecast messages over accuracy. They will rely on automated forecast based on computer models for a region. “Nature never does what a machine wants it to do. When it comes to severe weather, you need local expert, the forecaster who knows the unique weather patterns, the geographic area, and the people we protect.”
3. One of the most critical problems of relying on national center forecasts is the disconnect that would develop between the largely centralized “forecast” as represented by the nationally gridded database and the associated products, and the local weather patterns and geographical information that local forecasters provide. Forecasters would be routinely placed in a compromising position of having to choose between a briefing based on an official/centralized forecast with which they disagreed, or briefing based on their own judgment informed by extensive local knowledge. It is NWSEO’s stand that the ownership of the forecast must be at the final point of delivery.
4. The NWS restructure plan will lead to a degradation of service in the following ways:
 - a. Local forecasters will be reduced to weather briefers – who are no longer responsible for the forecast and merely who disseminates information from the National Center.
 - b. Local weather forecast office hours will change from the current 24/7/365 schedule to part-time and in some cases, possibly seasonal operations.
 - c. Seasonal forecasters opens the door for migrant forecasters who travel to an area to cover a severe weather event. They will not be familiar with local emergency managers and local stakeholders, specific area needs, and will not have expertise in local weather patterns or the trouble-spots of specific to where you live (flood prone areas, etc.) like your current local forecasters.
5. Each geographic region has its own unique weather patterns. Local forecasters understand these patterns and apply this knowledge to the computer models. Their

intimate knowledge of these weather patterns, the geographic region, the flood prone areas, and the demographics of people whose lives they protect are critical to their lifesaving work.

6. The NWS already uses the National Blended Models as a starting point for the forecast; currently your local forecaster takes the information from the models and incorporates local weather patterns to tailor the forecast for their local area. In a pursuit of consistency over accuracy, the NWS's Restructure plan will not emphasize local patterns and the expertise of the local forecast.
7. Weather Experts agree that ownership of the forecast must be at the final point of delivery.
8. The NWS's new ideas are a far contrast from the NWS Modernization in 2000 which stressed the work of local forecasters, the ideas are against the National Academy of Public Administration's recommendations to Congress in 2013, and conflict with the research from the 2012 National Research Council's report, "Weather Services for the Nation: Becoming Second to None (National Academies Press, 2012)" stating, "local knowledge of phenomena, terrain, and infrastructure is an important factor in forecasting, and it needs to be accounted for in any potential regionalization of functions."
9. NWSEO agrees the NWS should advance and has a vision stresses that the NWS must ensure that the provision of accurate, timely, and locally-focused weather forecasts and warnings are maintained at the current high level. These experts know and understand unique local forecasting challenges and the impacts those challenges may have on the safety and lives of people residing in their local communities.

What the plan means to NWS Employees:

1. FIFS could pave the way for the elimination of jobs, as it will allow managers to adjust schedules on an as needed basis, according their needs.
2. The NWS presentation made it clear that the work of all positions would change. As the NWS relies more heavily on National Blended Models, the role of local forecasters and support personnel will also change. Under the FIFS "Frequency of Need" there is a likelihood that local office staffing could fluctuate depending on the season, in addition to overall decreased operating hours.
3. Here are just a few pointed changes the NWS is working on:
 - a. Centralize and automate all forecasts, except for 0-12 or 0-18 hours,

- b. Undisclosed number of WFOs will operate on a part-time basis, presumably doing no forecasting at all.
 - c. Undisclosed who will be responsible for issuing warnings: “We wouldn’t be doing our job if we didn’t look at” centralizing warnings at National Centers. “Everything is on the table.”
 - d. Eliminating the work of the HMTs,
 - e. Allow for a single person on duty by eliminating the two employees per shift rule,
 - f. “Flexible staffing” and “staffing surges” – instead of fixed work schedules.
 - g. Allowing management flexibility in schedules instead of fixed-work schedules.
4. Much of this plan continues to be developed in secret. In August 2015 the NWS imposed non-disclosure agreements on NWSEO team members of OWA. When NWSEO refused to sign, they removed them from the teams. NWSEO has been included back on most teams, but when NWSEO team members introduce their ideas, they are told they are not allowed to have positions.