



National Weather Service Plans Dangerous Personnel Cuts Despite Funding and Support from Congress for NWS Positions

(May 3, 2012) The National Weather Service is making plans for dangerous cuts at Weather Forecast Offices, with no regard to support and funding from both the House and Senate to keep those same positions. In late April, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees approved an increase in NWS funding over FY 12 with specific statements supporting the ITO position at WFOs nationwide.

In his employee news column, "The Director's Corner," NWS Director Jack Hayes is telling NWS employees that the NWS is developing plans to "mitigate any impacts from reductions" and that the NWS is seeking Voluntary Early Retirement Authority and the Voluntary Separation Incentive programs. The request will target specific positions rather than NWS employees broadly.

Additionally, NWS has already announced they will not be filling numerous vacant ITO positions and has begun reassigning ITOs to vacant forecast positions.

"This demonstrates an enormous and dangerous amount of arrogance on the part of the National Weather Service leadership," said NWSEO President Dan Sobien. "The ITO positions have full bi-partisan support of Congress, the National Weather Service is actually one of the few agencies that received an increase in funding for FY13, and yet NWS leaders are trying to cut positions and then blame it on funding."

Below are comments from the House and Senate Appropriations Committees:

From the House- "The Committee does not support NOAA's proposal to reduce funding for information technology positions at each of the Weather Forecast offices. Eliminating these positions during deployment of Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) upgrade is risky. In addition, NOAA has not yet developed a thorough concept for where the proposed information technology development teams would be located, how many technicians would be on each team, or how they would be deployed if more than four information technology teams arose at the same time."

From the Senate- "The Committee does not approve of the administration's plan to reduce the NWS IT staff by 80 percent, which would affect 122 employees by cutting 98 computer technician positions in local field offices and consolidating the remaining 24 positions into six regional offices. Every Local Weather Filed Office across America would be affected by these cuts. The United States experienced some of the most devastating severe weather on record in 2011, and 2012 is already shaping up to be another damaging year. According to the NWS, the recent February 28 to March 2, 2012 severe storm outbreak spawned 230 tornadoes across 14 States, killing 54 people. Without NOAA's warnings, more lives would have been lost, and IT staff have proven to be valuable parts of the local weather forecast teams. In addition, NOAA needs a strong IT workforce now for the same reason the agency originally hired more IT staff in 2000, which was to help with network upgrades."

Why is the NWS broke?

The chart below shows the three lines in the NWS annual budget appropriations that directly support forecasting activities and employee salaries – “Local Warnings and Forecast Base”; “Aviation Weather” and “Central Forecast Guidance” (the later is NCEP funding). The combined amounts have increased 8.5% over the past three years. Although the President proposed to cut this amount for FY 13, both the House and Senate have increased funding by \$9 million over FY 2012 levels – which would mean that the NWS will receive a 10% increase over four years.

YEAR	2009	2010	2011	2012	PB-2013	Senate-2013	House-2013
LWF Base	\$601,876	\$617,842	\$628,121	\$631,168	\$628,564	\$640,000	\$639,905
Aviation Wx	5,253	11,363	11,538	21,470	21,452	21,452	21,452
Central Forecast Guidance	67,253	79,525	79,208	78,845	79,224	79,224	79,224
TOTAL	\$674,382	\$708,730	\$718,867	\$731,483	\$729,240	\$741,076	\$740,581

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