



---

**Noncompetitive hardship transfer takes job from qualified HMT -  
NWSEO works for fair treatment.**

(June 6, 2014) The National Weather Service's misuse of the negotiated Hardship Transfer Program proceeds to arbitration after the agency denied a NWSEO grievance. At issue is a Western Region OPL position that was refused to the qualified in-house HMT and instead was assigned noncompetitively to a non-HMT employee who used the Hardship Transfer program.

The negotiated agreement on the Hardship Transfer Program does not allow for noncompetitive hardship reassignment because this disadvantages other hardship transfer applicants who are forced to still compete for a transfer move through the merit assignment program.

This noncompetitive transfer also violates the 2004 agreement that created the OPL position. That agreement provides that the initial and all subsequent OPL vacancies will be filled competitively, with consideration limited to NWS status applicants in the local commuting area, and the most senior HMT on station would be given special consideration. The area of consideration can be expanded if there are no qualified applicants in the local area.

The OPL position was not intended for those in the meteorologist occupational series. The agreement was designed specifically to provide an opportunity for HMTs (whose job mobility was being adversely impacted by the opening of vacant HMT positions to intern applicants) an opportunity to obtain promotion to the GS 12 grade prior to their retirement in order to enhance their retirement benefits. Additionally, all hardship transfers applications require the approval of NWSEO. The union did not receive or approve this candidate's most recent application.

Please note, NWSEO fully supports the use of the Hardship Transfer Program, but individuals must submit the adequate documentation of hardship for approval by the union. Abuse of this important program could negate the positive outcome that was desired for HMTs in this specific case and all NWS employees in future instances.

-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.**