



# *The Four Winds*

*National Weather Service Employees Organization*

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## **NWS All Hands Webinar Discloses Plans To Change Forecaster Duties, Eliminate Jobs, and Cut Office Hours**

(September 29, 2016) Instead of filling in excess of 600 vacancies, the NWS announces plans for a Fully Integrated Field Structure (FIFS) will completely change the way the National Weather Service works, NWS leadership presented their initial steps towards restructuring the agency with part-time offices and the possibility of eliminating positions. NWS Director Dr. Louis Uccellini, NWS Deputy Assistant Administrator Laura Furgione, and Chief Operating Office John Murphy presented the Webinar, highlighting the term “Evolve NWS” on September 28 and 29.

The plan envisions “National Centers” producing the probabilistic forecast and assessing guidance leaving local offices to apply observations and forecasts to IDSS (i.e. weather briefer). 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. Plans include changes to office staffing levels, decreasing office hours from their current 24/7/365 structure, and the elimination of some positions.

The 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.

Here are just a few pointed changes the NWS is working on:

- Centralize and automate all forecasts, except for 0-12 or 0-18 hours,
- Undisclosed number of WFOs will operate on a part-time basis, presumably doing no forecasting at all.
- 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.”
- Eliminating the work of the HMTs,
- Allow for a single person on duty by eliminating the two employees per shift rule,

- “Flexible staffing” and “staffing surges” – instead of fixed work schedules.
- Allowing management flexibility in schedules instead of fixed-work schedules.

During the Q & A session, one employee pointedly asked what would happen to the HMT position. NWS Deputy Assistant Administrator Laura Furgione responded, “Some activities we do today, we won’t in the future.” She said that technology advances would eliminate the need for some of their work and said the HMTs would need additional training. Ms. Furgione then asked, “How do you see yourself evolving and what critical role are you playing?”

In spite of this being a formal meeting, they did not allow NWSEO’s participation as prescribed by the law. Much of this plan continues to be developed in secret; you may remember 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.

“Everyone agrees we need to change and modernize,” said NWSEO President Dan Sobien, “it’s too bad the agency refuses to work with the union in developing a plan that would further the agency’s mission while showing maintaining the integrity of all NWS employees. NWSEO is in favor of change, but this high-risk, low-reward plan is not the change we want.”

-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.**