



Arbitrator rules in favor of NWS employees unable to get to work in 2016 blizzard; Grants Administrative Leave under current CBA

(March 15, 2017) The National Weather Service violated employees' rights under the current NWSEO-NWS Collective Bargaining Agreement when it failed to grant administrative leave to two emergency essential employees who, although making diligent efforts, were unable to make it to work during the 2016 blizzard in Washington D.C. metropolitan area. The grievants work in NCEP Central Operations in Silver Spring.

On March 6, a Federal Arbitrator ruled in favor of the employees who had been declared Absent without Leave (AWOL) after blizzard conditions, including 18-30 inches of snow, prevented them from traveling to work in January 2016. Heavy snowfall started on Friday, January 22 through Sunday, January 24. Neither employee was scheduled to work on those days, but the deep snow and severe weather hampered their ability to commute to work on Monday, January 25. Both employees had documented efforts to get to work and communications with their managers regarding their transportation problems. One of the employees did arrive at work several hours later. NWSEO filed the grievance on behalf of the employees challenging the Agency's decision because the employees made diligent efforts to attend work at their scheduled time. Employees at NCEP Central Operations in Silver Spring who were scheduled to work over the weekend were offered hotels rooms, nearby, at agency expense. The grievants, who were not scheduled to work between their last shift on Thursday and the following Monday, were not made the same offer nor were they informed that they were expected to stay in a hotel until they filed a grievance over their AWOL.

The Arbitrator directed the NWS to rescind the AWOL and grant administrative leave to the two employees for those shifts. The decision affirms Article 19, section 7(A)(6) of the current CBA which outlines the NWS's obligation to grant administrative leave to emergency employees who make a diligent effort to get to work, if they are unable to do so, due to severe weather conditions.

Article 19, section 7(A)(6)

SECTION 7. HAZARDOUS WEATHER CONDITIONS

A. NWS operations must continue around the clock, 7 days a week despite adverse weather conditions. The NWS has decided all employees scheduled for operational work, or otherwise identified as operational by the station supervisor due to exigency of the situation, are "emergency employees." In accordance with Federal regulations, all emergency personnel are required to report for work as scheduled or to continue

to perform their duties regardless of action taken to excuse other employees from duty.

During hazardous weather emergencies (example: blizzard, ice storm, etc.), the following procedure will be followed:

6. Management may decide to grant an appropriate amount of administrative leave to emergency employees who are required to report for duty and who demonstrate they have made a diligent effort to get to work on time but are prevented from doing so because of hazardous weather or other emergency conditions.

The NWS opened the CBA for negotiations in July 2015. Formal negotiations begin on April 3. The CBA is the contract that outlines employees' rights, schedules, and benefits. NWSEO will keep you up to date with the latest CBA news from the negotiations table through the newsletter [Contract Connect](#). Contract Connect is your direct source for negotiation updates, from bargaining unit employees for bargaining unit employees.

-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.**