



NESDIS Office of Satellite Products and Operations hires Non-government Contractors to fill Full Time Positions – Violating the Federal Hiring Freeze

(April 10, 2017) The NESDIS Office of Satellite Products and Operations (OSPO) has hired several contractors, instead of federal employees, as satellite controllers in order to avoid the President's hiring freeze. NWSEO immediately filed a complaint with the Department of Commerce Inspector General.

In fall 2016, OSPO issued a vacancy announcement for multiple "physical science technicians" to work as satellite controllers on the GOES-R Mission Operations Support Team. According to memos from the OSPO Director, seven controllers were needed to be on board no later than February 6 in order to receive training in time for the planned June GOES-R operations handover. A March 20, 2017 memo from the OSPO Director states that only three of the seven controllers were hired. OSPO then used a contract with ARSC Federal Technical Services to post a vacancy announcement for the remaining positions on March 22. Several controllers have now been hired through ARSC and are being trained, side-by-side, with the federal employees who were hired before the freeze went into effect.

Management's actions violate the Presidential Memorandum Regarding the Hiring Freeze which states, "Contracting outside the Government to circumvent the intent of this memorandum shall not be permitted." The actions also constitute an illegal personal services contract because the contract employees are performing the same work as federal employees, under daily federal supervision, at a federal facility, using federal equipment.

In addition to the complaint with the Department of Commerce Inspector General, NWSEO also informed the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

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