



Contract Connect

Highlights

- **Management maneuvers to greatly reduce overtime opportunities for Electronic Technicians, Information Technology Officers, Service Hydrologists and Administrative Support Assistants.**
- **After weeks of negotiations and through Week 1 of this session concerning scheduling, NWS and NWSEO (the Parties) conceptually agreed to expand the use of flexible work, traditional, compressed and/or seniority-based shift schedules for employees that traditionally work rotating shifts.**
- **Week 2 – NWS backs away from nearly all the recommendations from the NWS/NWSEO Shift Work Team by unilaterally withdrawing what was agreed upon at the negotiating table by NWS and NWSEO, and now simply wants rotating shift schedules.**
- **NWS regressive bargaining draws a harsh response from NWSEO Chief Negotiator**

(February 18, 2018) Negotiations for the new NWS-NWSEO Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) continued in St. Petersburg, FL during a two-week session February 5th through February 16th, 2018.

The headline for this 2-week CBA session – *Conceptually Agreeable to at the Table*. For those who regularly read “Contract Connect”, the past several weeks focused on negotiations over Article 20 (Work Schedules of Shift Workers (NWSEO) / Work Schedules of Rotating Shift Workers (NWS)). The Parties dabbled into Article 21 (Work Schedules for Employees Who Work on a Non-Rotating Shift Basis (NWSEO) / Work Schedules for People Who Do Not Work Rotating Shifts (NWS)), but the primary focus has been on developing a more flexible framework for developing work schedules within Article 20.

In the discussions on Article 20 and 21 management once again insisted that ETs, ITOs, ASAs and SH’s (anyone who does not specifically work rotating shifts full time) be placed under Article 21. What this means is that these employees likely would not get overtime when their shift hours change inside the fixed schedule. The only time they would get overtime would be if their schedule was changed during the administrative work week (Sunday through Saturday). For instance if an ET was told on a Saturday to fix the radar on Sunday, they would not get overtime for that. In the union’s proposal ETs, ITOs, SHs, ASA, hydrologists that do not rotate etc. would be placed in Article 20 and continue to be placed in the fixed schedule and continue to get overtime if that schedule changes.

Work schedules are the heart of our CBA. Work schedules were the catalyst for the very formation of the NWSEO 42 years ago when Weather Service Employees united to get a fixed work schedule.

Employees desired some stability in their schedules because without the fixed schedule employees would frequently find themselves showing up for a scheduled shift only to be told to come back later when their services could be better used.

Until this past week, it seemed the energies of both Parties' were focused on creating a better quality of worklife for rotating shift workers by integrating into the new CBA the work of the recent shift work team and its many predecessors. If the Parties cannot work together to resolve their differences over scheduling, the Union is pessimistic of being able to work with the management representatives on any issue.

The Union's CBA proposals incorporated forward thinking ideas from our own members, including scheduled recuperative breaks (including, as operations allow, mild exercise or rest options for overnight shifts to boost energy levels in people suffering from fatigue as operations allow); encouraging more 'personalized' and flexible schedules, expanding health club reimbursements, assisting in child/elder care; part-time and job-sharing options (currently very rare in the NWS), and installing exercise equipment and showers at all offices. None of these shift work team recommendations were included in the NWS proposals management has shown little interest in the union's worklife proposals. In addition, NWSEO stressed the importance of having "fully staffed" Offices, because without full and proper staffing, these ideas will not have a chance of being implemented.

After working for nearly six weeks on Article 20 with both sides submitting proposals and counter proposals and conceptionally agreeing to expand the use of flexible work, traditional, compressed and/or seniority-based shift schedules that may or may not rotate, ***Management, in their clearest example of regressive bargaining to date***, backed out of allowing employees the ability to try schedules that do not rotate; instead, wanting to keep rotating shift schedules. Because the Union made many compromises and trades to get to a consensus including non-rotating shifts, Management's regressive tactics forced the Union to submit counter proposals to protect our members' interests. Sadly, we did not progress forward in this session but instead went backwards as Management's negotiation tactics turned regressive. These negative tactics have essentially obliterated the trust we'd worked hard to establish with the Management team and will only serve to hinder cooperation going forward.

The NWSEO negotiators once again adamantly requested intervention by means of a mediator or facilitator. Management once again rejected our request. The inclusion of a third party at the table would hopefully help temper the frequently "childish and rude" antics of the NWS Chief Negotiator and create a positive and healthy environment that would allow the Parties to progress towards a successful and forward leaning CBA as promised by NWS Management's all hands emails to NWS employees.

Finally after the President's budget was released the union questioned management about negotiating scheduling Articles while the agency was planning big changes to operations. In a previous negotiating session management's Chief Negotiator told the union essentially that OWA plans would have no impact on the CBA.

At this session the union complained that had we known the agency was definitely planning on closing offices at night that it would likely have had an impact on both parties' proposals and counter proposals. Each management negotiator denied having knowledge of the plans to cut staff and part time offices was going to be in the 2019 budget. Management's Chief Negotiator admitted that any OWA plans were not addressed in their CBA proposals and would have to be negotiated through midterm bargaining of whatever CBA (the 2001 or the one being negotiated) is in effect at the time.

NO tentative agreements were reached during this two-week session.

The NWSEO Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Dan Sobien, NWSEO President & Chief Negotiator, Meteorologist, Tampa Bay Area, WFO (Ruskin), FL
2. JoAnn Becker, NWSEO NCEP Regional Chair, Senior Aviation Meteorologist, NCEP/Aviation Weather Center, Kansas City, MO
3. David Solano, NWSEO Secretary/Treasurer and Eastern Region Chair, Senior Hydro-Meteorologist, Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center, State College, PA
4. Mike Dion, NWSEO Headquarters Chair, Digital and Graphical Information Support Branch, NWS Headquarters, Silver Spring, MD
5. Delyne Kirkham, Hydrometeorological Technician (HMT), WFO Elko, NV
6. John Werner, NWSEO Southern Region Chair, Lead Forecaster, WFO Mobile, AL (Attended the opening day of this negotiation session)

The Agency/NWS Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Kenneth Brown, J.D., National Weather Service Chief Negotiator
2. Michael Mercer, Chief, Environmental & Scientific Services Division, NWS/Alaska Region Headquarters, Anchorage, AK (present only during week two).
3. David Murray, NWS Labor-Management Relations (LMR) Liaison, Silver Spring, MD
4. Mike Vescio, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Pendleton, OR
5. Sally Pavlow Johnson, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO St. Louis, MO (present only during week one)
6. Vacant Management Negotiator Position.

Contract Connect, the negotiation newsletter for bargaining unit employees from bargaining unit employees, brings the latest news from the negotiations table to you. It is distributed as quickly as possible after each CBA negotiation session. The next CBA negotiation session is scheduled from March 5 – March 16, 2018 at National Weather Service Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD.

-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.