



National Weather Service Employees Organization

A Message from NWSEO President Werner

March 26, 2020

Dear NWSEO brothers and sisters,

I hope this message finds you well and holding up under the challenges and stresses of these unprecedented times which the nation and the world have been experiencing. I commend you for continuing to lean forward in providing invaluable and uninterrupted services to our partners and the public, despite the enormous amount of stress we're all under. I assure you that while you're fulfilling your duties either from your office or your home, NWSEO continues to work diligently to represent your best interests, address issues and concerns, and correspond frequently with management to try to mitigate the negative impacts on your well-being.

Many of you have inquired about various contingencies for staffing, scheduling, leave, etc. as we struggle to balance our dedication to the agency mission while simultaneously tending to our personal and family needs. Caring for yourselves and your loved ones is of the utmost importance. We also must remember that we're critical members of an expansive NOAA family. It's from this family perspective I ask you to also look after the well-being of your coworkers. If you become aware of somebody struggling with the stress and fear resulting from the pandemic, or the financial impacts of the national emergency, or anything else, we urge you to take precious time to consult with them and help out any way you can. This is a unique and historical situation of which none of us have had to deal with before. Leveraging our work family, we all need to assist one another to get through this difficult time. If ever there was a time for unity and solidarity amongst NOAA employees, this is it!

NWSEO is particularly concerned about those employees in "high risk" categories. If you feel yourself or a coworker fits into such a category and is not being protected appropriately, please let your steward and/or regional chairperson know immediately! It's also extremely important for those still working in their offices that these areas remain environmentally safe to the maximum extent possible. Along with restricted entry, offices need to have the sanitizer and cleaning supplies required to achieve this. Again, please notify your steward and regional chairperson of any concerns.

We've also fielded a myriad of questions pertaining to safety, hazardous duty pay, administrative leave, expedited COVID-19 testing, and other means meant to protect or compensate us during this dangerous time. NWSEO continues to communicate with agency management on these issues; however, it's currently difficult to obtain answers to these questions.



For example, expedited testing is rightfully being prioritized for first responders, medical professionals, and others at the forefront of the battle. Yet, even many of the first responders are not receiving this priority due to the shortage of test kits.

We're working with management to coordinate with our partners to develop a process to give our mission critical, operational folks testing priority. Despite having frequent and direct contact with the public, many of our first responders are also not receiving hazardous duty compensation currently.

Our workforce continues to be recognized as one of the most dedicated in the Nation, and we too are in the business of protecting lives and property. We take great pride in what we do, and in the sacrifices, we make in order to serve our partners and communities. Despite the current crisis, we're fortunate to remain gainfully employed, while our families, neighbors and friends are sequestered in their homes and away from their jobs. Sadly, many are receiving little to no income and are doing so without the strong support system we have as essential government employees. NWSEO continues and will continue to work tirelessly on your behalf to provide as much protection for NOAA employees as is feasibly possible. We must ensure that we, our families, and our co-workers stay safe and that we can continue to provide the critical support we provide to our Nation.

If you have additional questions, concerns, suggestions, best practices, etc., please share them with your local steward and/or your regional chairperson. We're here to listen and to assist wherever and whenever we can. Above all, remember to take care of yourselves, your families, and keep a watchful eye out for coworkers who may be struggling during this trying situation. Remember, we are all in this fight together, and together, we will persevere!

I'm incredibly proud to work with all of you, both as a coworker and as your NWSEO President.

Thank you all for your service! Be safe and look out for one another.

Warmest regards,

John Werner

John Werner
President, National Weather Employees Organization