



## **NWSEO Files a Grievance to Protect Leave Time of Emergency/Essential Employees during Hazardous Weather Conditions**

(January 11, 2011) NWSEO has filed a grievance on behalf of two members who were unable to travel to work due to the hazardous weather conditions in early December. NWSEO alleges that management is engaging in a continuing violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement by establishing and applying a policy to deny administrative leave to emergency/essential employees who are unable to report to work during hazardous weather emergencies.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation pulled snow plows off of the roads and advised the public not to travel due to blizzard conditions in early December. Two operational employees at WFO MPX were unable to report for their scheduled shifts because they live some distance from the office and travel was impossible. The Acting MIC was told that he could not grant these employees administrative leave because of Instructions from national NWS headquarters.

NWSEO's Central Region Chair, Martin Lee, inquired from Central Region management whether there was a policy that prohibits granting employees administrative leave in these circumstances. He received a letter from the Deputy Region Director stating:

"The guidance is correct. Employees with mission critical responsibilities are designated as "emergency employees" and [are] required to report to, or remain at work, despite an emergency that may require closing government offices and dismissal of non-emergency employees...

"In the case of the Minneapolis blizzard, NWS emergency employees were required to report to work, or to request leave using normal leave procedures. Administrative Leave was not an option for those emergency employees."

This policy is a patent violation of Article 19, section 7(A)(3),(6) of the CBA which provides that the local facility head or designee may grant administrative leave to emergency employees who are prevented from reporting to work because of hazardous weather conditions. However, the Minneapolis WCM was told by the Central Region that he could not grant administrative leave because there was a policy prohibiting granting administrative leave to emergency employees.

Ironically, during the Blizzard of 2010 that occurred the last week of December, the Eastern Region Headquarters closed their offices due to hazardous weather conditions and all employees there were granted administrative leave.

NWSEO is demanding that the NWS rescind this blanket policy and notify, in writing, all facility heads and all bargaining unit employees that emergency employees may be granted administrative leave when they are prevented from reporting to work in hazardous weather conditions.

NWSEO is also demanding that MPX WFO employees who were unable to travel to work be granted administrative leave for the day in question and that any other leave they were required to take on that day be restored.

NWSEO is also demanding that any other bargaining unit employee who was prevented from reporting to work due to emergency weather conditions this winter and who were denied administrative leave due to this policy have their leave restored.

If you were unable to work due to hazardous weather conditions, and think this grievance applies to you, please read Article 19, section 7(A)(3),(6) below, then contact Lisa Luciani at [mediarelations@nwseo.org](mailto:mediarelations@nwseo.org). Documentation will be required. For more information on the Collective Bargaining Agreement, visit <http://nwseo.org/library/nwsnwseocba.html>. (Link may be cut and pasted into your browser.)

Article 19, section 7 (A) (3) (6) reads:

#### **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:

3. Within his/her delegation of authority, the facility head will determine if the situation warrants granting of any administrative leave or whether the use of a liberal leave policy is appropriate for any employees of the facility.

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.

#### **Deadlines Approaching for The NWS Health Club and Wellness Services Fees Reimbursement Program**

Beginning a fitness routine or joining a gym is a good way to start the New Year. Thanks to NWSEO, NWS employees can have their health club membership fees reimbursed through the

negotiated National Weather Service Health Club and Wellness Services Fees Reimbursement Program.

Form B must be submitted between January 1, 2011 and February 28, 2011 for reimbursement for the year 2010.

Form A must be submitted between January 1, 2011 and February 28, 2011 to receive benefits for 2011.

For complete information on the National Weather Service Health Club and Wellness Service Fees Reimbursement Program and copies of Form A and Form B, please visit [www.nwseo.org](http://www.nwseo.org).