



National Weather Service
Employees Organization

North Wind

NWSEO Negotiates Agreement with NWS over Reduced Hours at Select Alaska WSOs – Current Positions, Time- off Awards and Training Secured by NWSEO

(May 10, 2011) All employees at Alaska WSOs will keep their current take home pay, receive time-off awards each year, and improved training as a result of NWSEO negotiations with the NWS over the reduced staffing issue at select WSOs. The agreement gains thousands of dollars in benefits and improved training for all WSO employees each year.

The NWS initially sought input from the NWSEO on their plans to reduce the hours of operations at Alaska WSOs Cold Bay, Yakutat, McGrath, and to reduce staffing at Annette and Saint Paul in December 2009. NWSEO solicited and received a lot of input on this issue from members at WSOs and WFOs across Alaska. The NWS plan is to reduce staffing through attrition. The NWS submitted formal proposals for these changes in April 2010 and the NWSEO then entered into Impact and Implementation bargaining negotiations seeking to improve the plan using member suggestions. These negotiations were completed March 3, 2011 and the agreement went into effect April 1, 2011.

Highlights of this agreement include:

- 1) **No one will lose their job due to the plan. All FTEs will remain Bargaining Unit operational positions.** WSO staff reductions will be through attrition as NWS originally proposed.
- 2) WSO employees who lose premium pay due to a reduction in station hours will receive an equivalent amount of pay provided they complete annual training requirements and perform satisfactorily.
- 3) WSO employees will receive a **5-day time off award each year.**
- 4) All WSO Bargaining Unit employees will receive **one administrative shift every other pay period** for training and professional development. Employees may telework during these shifts. New training requirements will be developed.
- 5) Numerous items to **improve training** such as: a WSO Liaison at the RO, improved internet bandwidth, one week of training at “parent” WFO, mandatory IDPs to indicate the training Met Techs seek, possibility to attend CPM and DATAC courses as available, and on the job training to assist experts visiting the WSO with work in electronics, hydrology and Coop sites.

6) Several provisions to allow the Local Office Team (LOT), made up of the OIC and Steward, to make the schedule more equitable, to adjust shifts times, and to voice preference for over time or MOBEU coverage for absences of greater than 2 weeks so that offices that want more over time may be able to get it.

7) Numerous communication and software issues were addressed including WSO Websites, WSO office email accounts, phones for emergency communications, voice mail, and situational awareness displays with Cable or Satellite TV.

These were complicated negotiations affecting many different offices and people. The negotiations were carried out by NWSEO Bethel Steward Bill Williams, NWSEO Nome Steward Wes Adkins, and Alaska Region Chair Jim Brader with assistance from Vice-Chair Phil Dutton, and many thanks go to them.

All WSO employees are encouraged to join NWSEO to support our cause of improving our working conditions and protecting the NWS. NWSEO is the only organization with the ability to lobby Congress and the Administration to preserve NWS jobs, promote better working conditions and career promotions for NWS, and participate in collective bargaining. There is strength in membership.

Sincerely,

Jim Brader, NWSEO Alaska Region Chair