



**NWS Abandons Plans for Wireless Weather Warning Apps –
Hands Dissemination of Warnings to the Private Sector**

(December 21, 2011) The National Weather Service plans to give the private sector complete control of weather warnings applications for wireless devices. An emerging tech team was deeply involved in this issue before NWS pulled it from the team under loud protest.

A message delivered today by Laura Furgione, Deputy Director of the National Weather Service, overruled the NWS’s emerging technology team, stating that the NWS is declaring a hold on use of NWS resources to develop warning applications. “The NWSEO worked very hard five years ago to keep Congress from privatizing the NWS, now our own management has done it for them,” NWSEO President Dan Sobien stated.

Many available commercial weather applications use NWS warnings and products. While some of the commercial apps credit NWS as the source of the information, not all of them do. Another cause for concern is that there is no regulation, certification, or policing of the information used on apps or widgets. So, it’s possible for an app to claim use of NWS data without actually having access to it.

“NWS management is risking the lives of the American public who pay their salaries and risking the good name of the NWS by placing the warning dissemination program of the United States of America in the hands of some 13 year old kid who created an app,” warned Sobien. “What could be more mission critical than the dissemination of our warnings?”

“Instead of looking to the future and utilizing the talents of our young workforce to find the newest methods to better disseminate our warnings, the NWS has chosen to turn its back on anything new. It seems they are okay with hearing about disaster victims who say they never got the warning” said Sobien.

Employees were given another option; they were instructed that if they wish to develop weather “apps” on their own time, they should contact the DOC Ethics Officer.

The letter from NWS Deputy Director Laura Furgione follows:

Request for Posting:	Laura K. Furgione Deputy Director, National Weather Service
Subject Line	Hold on Development of Weather Applications for Wireless Devices
Distribution	NWS All Hands



National Weather Service

Building a Weather-Ready Nation

Message from the Deputy Director

There are thousands of weather applications available for iPhone, Android, iPad, and similar wireless devices. Many of them are provided at little or no cost. Many of them use National Weather Service (NWS) warnings and other weather products and some explicitly identify NWS as the source of their information. Given this well-established and growing market for device-specific weather applications for wireless devices, NWS is declaring a hold on use of any NWS resources, including on-duty time of NWS employees, to develop such applications.

This will avoid using NWS resources to duplicate products readily available in the marketplace and give NWS time to carefully evaluate our appropriate role. For clarity, this hold does not apply to development of applications intended solely to support NWS employees in the performance of our mission. Request for exceptions should be sent to Ron Jones, NWS Office of the Chief Information Officer (Ronald.C.Jones@noaa.gov).

Finally, NWS employees who wish to develop weather “apps” on their own time are advised to contact the Department of Commerce Ethics Officer (ethicsdivision@doc.gov, [202-482-5384](tel:202-482-5384)).

Laura K Furgione

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