



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

Transparency?

What NWS won't tell you about plans for the future.

(August 21, 2015) For the first time in the history of NWSEO, the agency is requiring union representatives to sign a confidentiality agreement before proceeding on a national team. The agency's much touted Organization Workforce Analysis (OWA), designed to evaluate your jobs and shape the future of the NWS, is requiring a signed [confidentiality agreement](#) from NWSEO participants along with all participants on the OWA teams. This veil of secrecy is becoming routine in working with agency leaders. Last May, NWSEO told you about a "[gag order](#)" that the Department of Commerce insisted on for NWSEO grievance settlements.

Signing these agreements would prevent NWSEO representatives from communicating with you regarding the plans for your future and how they are determined. The confidentiality agreements prevent NWSEO representatives from obtaining the member input required to make decisions. Essentially, the confidentiality agreements keep you in the dark regarding your employment.

NWSEO was assured they would be an integral partner in all phases of OWA. The NWS stressed a commitment to transparency in the beginning of the process and highlighted the importance of employee input and buy-in to future redesigned programs and job descriptions.

Already, NWS OWA communications have been lapse. The teams that NWSEO was invited to join for OWA didn't start meeting until the end of Phase 1 in mid-July. Phase 1 of the process began with NWS selected site visits from McKinsey & Company - a management consulting firm hired by the NWS to spearhead the OWA process and evaluate the current NWS structure including your jobs. An employee survey called the Organization Health Index (OHI), which many of you completed, was also part of the OWA Phase 1.

As OWA Phase 2 begins, NWS is vetting the results of the recent McKinsey & Company OHI survey before releasing information and communications to employees and other stakeholders. The results of this study will shape the future organization of the NWS. While an initial review of the results by the agency is expected, issuing a confidentiality agreement to NWSEO in order to participate in this review is neither expected nor acceptable.

In an email to NWS leadership, NWSEO President Dan Sobien explained, "It would be completely unethical for union representatives to partake in these meeting without input from our members, those representatives would be representing themselves, not the union."

On August 20, NWSEO was un-invited to the OHI meeting and some of the core team meetings, as well.

“If everyone on the team is signing a confidentiality agreement, it’s clear there is nothing transparent about this process,” said Sobien. “You have to wonder, what is so awful about the results of the Organization Health Index, that the National Weather Service requires this confidentiality agreement as they analyze the results.”

The *Operations and Workforce Analysis Statement of Objectives* posted on the NWS Insider promises Transparency and Engagement. But if you read the full explanation (Constraints #2), there is nothing to support transparency.

“Transparency and Engagement: The McKinsey and Co will work with, and support, the NWS in its engagement efforts, but will not assume the role of Federal Government Officials in any authority or capacity with stakeholders unless explicitly outlined by the Government, and understood by the stakeholders.”

An original draft for NWS Insider OWA communications included the wording, “appropriate transparency” which was deleted when an NWSEO representative asked, “Who decides what is appropriate?”

“As a taxpayer, this lack of transparency completely lowers my trust in the government. Anything that occurs in the OWA meetings are owned by the American public. The thought that the NWS can put blinds over the windows by making any of the participants sign a confidentiality agreement is about the worst kind of government,” said Sobien.

NWSEO continues to work for the representation of all NWS and bargaining unit employees and will continue to communicate with you on all of these issues.

-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.**