



NWS develops plans to part time most WFOs by FY 19 despite NWS Director Uccellini's assurances to the contrary.

(February 27, 2017) On the same day that National Weather Service Director Dr. Uccellini tells employees, "part timing of the offices is off the table," presentation slides showing distinct plans to part time offices are distributed at NCEP's annual planning meeting.

NWSEO has obtained a 37 slide PowerPoint presentation made to NCEP managers on February 14, 2017 at NCEP's Annual Operating Plan meeting. The presentation was made by the Director of the Office of Programming and Planning for Service Delivery, who is tasked with execution of the Evolve NWS plans. Only the first 22 slides were presented at the meeting. Slides 23-37, which were distributed but not shown, highlight plans to reduce staff and part time offices. According to this PowerPoint, developed and partially presented by the NWS's Project Management Office, only 37 of the 116 WFOs in the continental U.S. will be operating 24/7/365 by FY 19.

Also on February 14, the same date as the NCEP annual meeting, NWS Director Dr. Uccellini assured employees, "the part timing of the offices is off the table" at a Fireside Chat webinar with the Cheyenne, Wyoming and Shreveport, Louisiana Weather Forecast Offices. This follows his statements at the January 2017 AMS meeting in Seattle, Washington that there will be no "part timing of Forecast Offices."

NWSEO believes it is important that you see the full PowerPoint presentation from the February 14 NCEP Annual Operating Plan meeting. Please note the following slides which contradict what the NWS Director said about the agency's plans. Keep in mind that slide 23-37 were prepared and distributed, but not presented at the NCEP meeting.

Slide 28: Some offices would no longer retain ongoing responsibilities for a 24/7 meteorological watch, with approximately 600 positions changed from today's staffing model. It is unclear how many of these positions would be eliminated vs. moved to another office, but the slide specifically mentions that "1/3 of the billets needing to change are vacant".

Slide 29: NWS is continuing with plans to reduce the hours of operations at many Weather Forecast Offices: "Certain offices could be routinely closed overnight save in exceptional circumstances." The slide shows that only 37 of 116 WFOs will continue with a "24/7/365 Met watch" (designated by the larger circles with red in them). The slide does not indicate what would happen to the 5 WFOs located in Alaska, Hawaii and Guam, or WSO Pago Pago which serves American Samoa. WFOs currently serving major cities including Houston, San Francisco, San Diego, Philadelphia, Las Vegas, St Louis, Tampa, Cincinnati and Indianapolis are designated as part time.

Slide 30: Shows that the NWS plans to implement these staffing changes and reduction in operating hours beginning in FY 2019.

Slide 31: Confirms that *“not all offices devote resources to staying open 24/7”* and that staffing on some shifts at the remaining 24/7 offices would be reduced in some cases to one person. With the demand for NWS decision support services constantly increasing, there are many scenarios in which such single person shift staffing would be dangerous to public safety, especially when combined with the plans to close many offices at night. For example, consider a train derailment occurring at 3 a.m., causing a toxic chemical spill requiring immediate local weather spot forecasts and decision support. The local WFO has been part timed and is currently closed, and it will take at least a couple of hours to wake someone up and get them on station. The 24/7 office covering the area is located several hundred miles away, and the single person working the midnight shift there is unfamiliar with the local area and the local Emergency Management core partners where the incident occurred. This scenario results in degraded service both to the area where the toxic spill occurred as well as to the area of the 24/7 office providing this support remotely with only one person available on shift.

Slides 34-35: Reveal that the “Evolve NWS” plans include having a single forecast office “produce grids for larger areas” (slide 34, item 2); having “collaborative radar operations” for multiple WFOs as well as “met watch mutual aid among a group of WFOs” (slide 34, item 5 and 6); and “field office group ops” (slide 35, item 9).

When these elements are combined with staffing reductions and relegating part time offices to merely distributing weather forecasts rather than producing them - you have nothing more nor less than former NWS Director D.L. Johnson’s (2004-2007) “concept of operations” or “CONOPS,” which Admiral Lautenbacher shelved a decade ago. Rather than “evolving,” the plans now being developed by NWS leadership will instead take the NWS back 25 years to the pre-modernization operating model, complete with a two-tier office structure where staff at the smaller non-24/7 offices become primarily briefers rather than forecasters.

“The PowerPoint slides are tangible proof that the agency is deceiving National Weather Service employees,” said NWSEO Executive Vice President Bill Hopkins. “The Director of the National Weather Service is briefing the field that no offices will close or be part timed, while his senior management is clearly working behind the scenes to plan the reduction, closures, and part timing of offices.”

NWSEO’s questions to NWS management are:

Why are you moving forward with plans which are dangerous to public safety and undo many of the positive structural changes NWS made during modernization in the 1990s?

Why are you being so deceptive and disingenuous to your employees?

-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.**