



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

NWSEO Arbitration Settlement – Twenty-Nine employees to Receive Temporary Promotions

(September 18, 2012) The National Weather Service has agreed to temporarily promote 29 employees at eight WFOs and two RFCs in resolution of a grievance filed by NWSEO last February. The grievance alleged that the NWS violated a May 10, 2001 side agreement with NWSEO in which management promised to make a temporary promotion any time a position is vacant for 20 days or more. Each of the employees who will be receiving a temporary promotion and back pay under the settlement agreement worked higher graded shifts left vacant for 20 days. The 29 employees will receive back pay for a total of 447 days that they performed the duties of a vacant position. The temporary promotions will be processed no later than October 14.

The offices involved were WFOs Corpus Christi, Houston, Jacksonville, Pleasant Hill, San Diego, Little Rock, Lubbock and Amarillo. The two RFCs involved in the grievance were Tulsa and Peachtree City.

As noted, temporary promotions were made to employees who actually worked the higher graded shifts. The settlement left unresolved the issue of whether management may avoid its promise to temporarily promote employees by assigning the vacant shifts to managers or other non-bargaining unit employees. Local NWSEO stewards should insist that management temporarily promote a unit employee (or unit employees) to cover the shifts of vacant positions rather than agreeing to allow management to work the shifts. The parties may agree locally to temporarily promote a particular employee to the vacant positions (such as the most senior qualified employee); to rotate the temporary promotion among qualified employees every pay period or two; or to cover the vacant shifts by “spot” promotions of qualified employees. This applies not only to vacant lead forecaster (or hydrologist) positions; but also to vacant journeyman positions if there is a qualified GS-11 intern on station who has a year in grade.

NWS and NOAA are taking longer and longer to backfill vacant operational positions, and it is NWSEO’s intention to minimize the financial incentive for these delays by insisting that lower graded employees get paid to do higher graded work.

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