



NWS Support to Departments of Transportation

Dr. Jim O'Sullivan
NOAA Surface Weather
Program Manager

7th *Clarus* Initiative Coordinating Committee

Charlotte, North Carolina

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Background

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- 2003 – National Research Council publishes *Fair Weather: Effective Partnerships in Weather and Climate Services* (National Academy Press, 2003)
 - In partnership with the private sector, NWS has been responding, re-evaluating, and defining services since *Fair Weather's* release
 - Prior policy statements include NWS support and services during special events in 2008
 - Became National Weather Service Instruction 10-1806 on July 14, 2009
 - NWS, FHWA, and private sector representatives contributed together on drafting and/or reviewing the policy prior to public comment period
 - Memo signed June 30 and sent throughout NWS soon afterwards
 - NWS Instruction currently being developed
 - Not a change in current level of support, but clarification of NWS commitment



NWS Notification – July 16



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PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON DC 1015 AM EDT THU JULY 16 2009

TO: FAMILY OF SERVICES /FOS/ SUBSCRIBERS...NOAA WEATHER WIRE SERVICE /NWS/ SUBSCRIBERS...EMERGENCY MANAGERS WEATHER INFORMATION NETWORK /EMWIN/ SUBSCRIBERS...OTHER NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE /NWS/ USERS AND PARTNERS...AND NWS EMPLOYEES

FROM: DAVID CALDWELL DIRECTOR...OFFICE OF CLIMATE WATER AND WEATHER SERVICES NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HEADQUARTERS

SUBJECT: NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE SUPPORT FOR STATE/LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION

ON JUNE 30 2009...THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE /NWS/ ISSUED AN INTERNAL MEMORANDUM PROVIDING GUIDANCE AND POLICY PRINCIPLES REGARDING NWS SUPPORT FOR STATE AND LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION /DOT/. HAZARDOUS WEATHER CONDITIONS CAN OFTEN NEGATIVELY IMPACT SURFACE TRANSPORTATION. NWS SUPPORT OF DOT'S FOCUSES ON OUR EXPERTISE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLUTION AND TIMING OF HAZARDOUS WEATHER EVENTS. WHILE NWS CAN PROVIDE SUPPORT TO OUR TRANSPORTATION PARTNERS AS THEY MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF WEATHER-RELATED HAZARDS...MORE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FROM AMERICAS WEATHER INDUSTRY /PRIVATE SECTOR PROVIDERS OF WEATHER SERVICES/...SUCH AS FORECASTING SURFACE/PAVEMENT CONDITIONS TO SUPPORT WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE DECISIONS. THE NWS PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICAS WEATHER INDUSTRY HELPS IMPROVE THE OVERALL LEVEL OF SERVICE THAT CAN BE PROVIDED TO THE PUBLIC. THE INTENT OF THE GUIDANCE IS TO CLARIFY THE ROLE OF NWS IN PROVIDING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AS WELL AS ADDRESS THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR WEATHER PROVIDERS IN PROVIDING COMPLEMENTARY SERVICES.

THE PUBLIC WAS GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND COMMENT ON THESE POLICY PRINCIPLES AND...BASED ON THIS REVIEW...WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE ARE OPERATING IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR USERS. WE DO NOT SEE THIS AS A CHANGE IN OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF SUPPORT...BUT RATHER A CLARIFICATION OF THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT NWS IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDE.

YOU MAY VIEW THE DOT SUPPORT GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM AT /USE LOWER CASE LETTERS/: [HTTP://WWW.WEATHER.GOV/SP/DOTSUPPORTGUIDANCE.PDF](http://www.weather.gov/sp/dotsupportguidance.pdf)

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS...PLEASE CONTACT: ELI JACKS NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE OFFICE OF CLIMATE WATER AND WEATHER SERVICES PHONE: 301-713-1858 X110 E-MAIL: ELLIOT.JACKS@NOAA.GOV

THIS AND OTHER NOTIFICATION MESSAGES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT /USE LOWER CASE LETTERS/: [HTTP://WWW.NWS.NOAA.GOV/OM/NOTIF.HTM](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/notif.htm) THIS PARTICULAR MESSAGE IS LISTED AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE...ABOVE THE SERVICE CHANGE NOTICE AND TECHNICAL IMPLEMENTATION NOTICE BOX.

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NWS Guidance Memo

- Signed by David Caldwell, Director of the NWS Office of Climate, Water and Weather Services
- Addressed to all NWS Regions, HQ Offices, and all Staff Offices

- **Introduction:**

Hazardous weather conditions can often negatively impact surface transportation. Local, municipal and state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) are at the forefront of mitigating the impact of weather-related hazards through proper planning and deployment of critical resources, and even closing roads when needed to protect the traveling public.

Our National Weather Service (NWS) has an uncompromising commitment to public safety and regularly interacts with a wide variety of partners to support its mission of protecting life and property. This includes interaction with DOTs to ensure they understand the information provided in our products related to hazardous weather, including winter weather conditions, that are anticipated or already occurring. NWS has been and will continue to provide these types of services.



NWS Guidance Memo



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- NWS support of DOTs focuses on our expertise and understanding of the evolution and timing of hazardous weather events.
 - The NWS does not :
 - Have specialized expertise in forecasting surface/pavement conditions of roads
 - Have the expertise to assess road treatment options
 - Points the reader to America’s Weather Industry (private sector providers of weather services) for these types of services
 - Information which goes beyond the strict provision of information related to expected weather conditions as it relates to travel safety is left to the private sector



NWS DOT Policy Principles



- NWS has an uncompromising commitment to public safety
- Various inclement weather conditions may expose motorists to potentially hazardous weather conditions which can result in heightened threats to safety, life and/or property
- DOTs require dependable understanding of, and communication with respect to, rapidly-evolving hazardous weather situations which impact public safety.
- NWS has a commitment to work with America's Weather Industry to provide the Nation with optimum weather services, including information in support of safe motorist travel
- NWS staff are to refer DOTs to America's Weather Industry for services or issues that transcend NWS' mission



NWS DOT Policy Principles



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- NWS offices may respond to questions from (or initiate contact with) local, municipal and/or state DOTs for the purpose of ensuring motorist safety, and for protecting life and property. These interactions should focus on helping to facilitate an understanding by DOTs of our standard product content and of the evolution and timing of hazardous weather conditions
 - NWS/DOT interaction will also occur in certain non-routine situations that may be critical to public safety, such as fires, hazardous material incidents, heavy fog, and dangerous conditions that fall below the criteria for issuance of, or are not well covered by standard NWS products



NWS DOT Policy Principles



- Examples of what NWS can do:
 - Initiate contact with DOTs or respond to questions from DOTs regarding significant weather events where public safety is at risk.
 - Interact with DOTs in non-routine situations that may be critical to public safety that fall below the criteria for issuance of, or are not well covered by standard NWS products
 - NWS may initiate contact with DOTs if previously-issued forecast information has changed that might significantly impact motorist safety or if the timing of an expected event has substantially changed
 - NWS personnel may provide a site-specific forecast upon request of any local, municipal or state DOT official who legitimately indicates that the forecast is essential to public safety (following NWS Instruction 10-401)
 - Work directly with DOTs prior to and during flood events impacting state and local transportation infrastructure (including events caused by ice jams, precipitation and/or rapid snow melt)



NWS DOT Policy Principles



- Examples of what NWS can do:
 - Coordinate on local mitigation activities for tropical weather systems and coastal extra-tropical systems (e.g., with respect to storm surge forecasting)
 - Interact to obtain severe weather and storm verification (e.g., via downed tree reports during cleanup, snow accumulation amounts)
 - Interact via Customer Service Workshops and “Awareness Weeks”
 - Provide basic weather and SKYWARN training, including training on how to access and use standard NWS products of all types
 - Initiate validation of observations with available automated observations
 - Coordinate and provide input in the selection of sites for DOT weather observation installation and upgrades (e.g. RWIS)
 - Work with DOTs in coordination and leasing of sites for NWS observation and dissemination instruments, equipment and platforms
 - Consult with DOTs regarding appropriate local warning and advisory criteria



NWS DOT Policy Principles



- Examples of what is beyond the scope of NWS personnel:
 - It is NWS policy *not* to provide site-specific forecasts or direct forecasting support to city, county or state DOT officials when the support is not related to the promotion of public safety and/or the protection of life and property
 - NWS personnel will *not* provide specialized weather support and customized consulting services to DOTs (e.g., forecasts of road surface temperatures or provision of advice as to which road chemicals are best suited for a particular circumstance). As discussed above, requests for these specialized consulting services, including support for winter road maintenance decisions, will be referred to America's Weather Industry
 - NWS personnel will *not* provide customized products (e.g., customized seasonal forecasts) for the purpose of supporting DOTs with their planning which is not directly weather-related (e.g., optimizing pre-season salt purchases).



NWS/DOT Support Points of Contact



For questions or comments, contact:

Jim O'Sullivan:

Jim.OSullivan@noaa.gov

(301) 713-1858 x176

Eli Jacks:

Elliot.Jacks@noaa.gov

(301) 713-1858 x110