



NWSEO Contract Connect

Highlights

- Management Remains Entrenched and Unwilling to Consider Quality of Work-Life Considerations for Shift Work Employees
- Management's Article 20 and 21 Proposals Effectively Decrease Work Schedule Certainty and **Reduce Premium Pay Opportunities** for Service Hydrologists (SHs), Port Meteorological Officers (PMOs), Information Technology Specialists (ITOs), Administrative Support Assistants (ASAs), Electronics Technicians (ETs), and others
- Management's Chief Negotiator from NOAA Tables Discussions on Work Schedules, Insisting Their Article 13 on "Performance Management" is Far More Important than Articles 20 and 21 (Work Schedules)
- NWSEO Negotiators Once Again Requested Intervention by Means of a Mediator or Facilitator to Make Some Progress. The Agency's Chief Negotiator from NOAA Finally Agrees to use Mediation through the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) on the Final Day of Negotiations

(March 21, 2018) Negotiations for the new NWS-NWSEO Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) continued in Silver Spring, MD during a two-week session March 5th through March 16th, 2018.

Negotiations on Article 20 (Work Schedules of Shift Workers (NWSEO) / Work Schedules of Rotating Shift Workers (NWS)) and Article 21 (Work Schedules for Employees Who Work on a Non-Rotating Shift Basis (NWSEO) / Work Schedules for People Who Do Not Work Rotating Shifts (NWS)) continued during the first week of this session. The Parties continued a long discussion over SHs, PMOs, ITOs, ASAs, ETs and others regarding which article each of these positions should be covered by. Management once again insisted that these positions (anyone who does not specifically work rotating shifts full time) be placed under Article 21. What this means is that none of these employees would get overtime when their shift hours change inside the fixed work schedule. NWSEO believes this is unfair as these employees have always been treated as Article 20 employees and have always been compensated with overtime when their work schedules changed inside the fixed schedule.

With management's proposal, the only time SHs, PMOs, ITOs, ASAs, ETs and others would get overtime would be if their schedule was changed during the administrative work week (Sunday through Saturday). For instance, if an ET was told on a Saturday to fix the radar on Sunday, they would not get overtime for that work.

In the Union's proposal, Article 20 would include both rotating and non-rotating operational employees and the aforementioned positions would be placed in Article 20 and continue to be placed on the fixed schedule and continue to get overtime if their schedule changes.

To reach agreement, NWSEO offered to leave some Bargaining Unit (BU) employees covered by Article 21, if they are given the same protections as those employees in Article 20; thus, all employees would have both planning and fixed work schedules. Management refused, and eventually, the Agency's Chief Negotiator tabled both Articles 20 and 21 and wanted no further discussions on the subject at this time. A frustrated NWSEO Chief Negotiator again requested a facilitator or mediator, to which the Agency Chief negotiator said, "the Union proposal is noted." NWSEO said the Parties should not walk away at this point and time since everyone has spent weeks and countless hours attempting to come to an agreement on this most important article, employee work schedules. Unfortunately, the Agency's Chief Negotiator for NOAA again would not even discuss the issue.

NWSEO feels work schedules and work-life balance are among the most important issues facing Bargaining Unit employees. NWSEO's commitment in this endeavor is as follows:

- NWSEO is dedicated to working collaboratively toward strengthening our CBA for the benefit of our stakeholders, our employees and NWS operations. **The focus of our efforts is to ensure employees can maintain a quality work-life balance**, while enabling the preparing and positioning of our workforce to deliver the very best forecast and all hazard services to all those who rely upon our products and services.

It has become painfully obvious that the motivations between the Parties diverge on the second sentence in the above paragraph: **"The focus of our efforts is to ensure employees can maintain a quality work-life balance..."** As we're all aware, stable work schedules are the foundation of this commitment.

Week 2 of this negotiation session focused on Article 13 (Performance Appraisals and Within Grade Increases (NWSEO) / Performance Management (NWS). One major difference between the two proposals is, Management is proposing a 5-tier Performance Plan, while NWSEO proposes the current 2-tier Performance Plan remain. NWSEO pointed out repeatedly that NOAA put out an Administrative Order (NAO) stating that all bargaining unit (BU) employees must be on a 2-tier system. Despite this, Management continued to push their 5-tier system proposal, but NWSEO said they are not hearing anyone yelling within Management or the BU for a 5-tier system.

Both Parties made numerous counter proposals within Article 13, and just like the previous Articles 20 and 21, Management refused to budge from their position, while the Union was willing to make some major concessions and try to reach an agreement through consensus.

NWSEO has repeatedly asked for a mediator or facilitator to sit in negotiations and work with each Party to find middle ground and agreement for the last several months. It wasn't until the final day of this negotiation session that Management's Chief Negotiator finally agreed to allow a trained mediator from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to attend our future negotiation sessions in April and May. NWSEO believes the use of a Federal Mediator is a positive step forward to help the Parties resolve differences, find middle ground, and obtain future tentative agreements.

NO tentative agreements were reached during this two-week session.

The NWSEO Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Dan Sobien, NWSEO President & Chief Negotiator, Meteorologist, Tampa Bay Area, WFO (Ruskin), FL
2. JoAnn Becker, NWSEO NCEP Region Chair, Senior Aviation Meteorologist, NCEP/Aviation Weather Center, Kansas City, MO
3. David Solano, NWSEO Secretary/Treasurer and Eastern Region Chair, Senior Hydro-Meteorologist, Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center, State College, PA
4. Mike Dion, NWSEO Headquarters Region Chair, Digital and Graphical Information Support Branch, NWS Headquarters, Silver Spring, MD
5. John Werner, NWSEO Southern Region Chair, Lead Forecaster, WFO Mobile, AL
6. Delyne Kirkham, Hydrometeorological Technician (HMT), WFO Elko, NV

The Agency/NWS Negotiation Team for this session included:

1. Kenneth Brown, J.D., National Weather Service Chief Negotiator - NOAA
2. Michael Mercer, Chief, Environmental & Scientific Services Division, NWS/Alaska Region Headquarters, Anchorage, AK (present only during week one).
3. David Murray, NWS Labor-Management Relations (LMR) Liaison, Silver Spring, MD
4. Mike Vescio, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO Pendleton, OR
5. Sally Pavlow Johnson, Meteorologist in Charge, WFO St. Louis, MO (present only during week two)

Contract Connect, the negotiation newsletter for bargaining unit employees from bargaining unit employees, brings the latest news from the negotiations table to you. It is distributed as quickly as possible after each CBA negotiation session. The next CBA negotiation session is scheduled from April 2nd - April 13th, 2018 in the Tampa Bay/St. Petersburg Area.

-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.