



The Four Winds

National Weather Service Employees Organization

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Tiger Teams Report from President Daniel Sobien

On January 18th and 19th, I attended a Corporate Board (CB) meeting to discuss the recommendations made by the Aviation, CONOPS and Information Technology (IT) Tiger Teams. These teams were commissioned to design the future of the National Weather Service (NWS). The CB has decided to move forward with some, but not all, of the recommendations from these three teams. The devil is in the details, and we'll wait and see what proposals the NWS forwards to us. I still have concerns, but all in all, we're headed in the right direction.

The best news for NWS employees is that the "Nested Office Concept" appears dead, at least for now. This is a major step in the right direction. The CB is moving forward with the recommendations of the CONOPS team instead. The team's approach clusters the WFO's and support offices into groups, thus leveraging their resources. If this is done correctly, it will free up resources to allow forecasters the time for training and the development of new programs. I argued strongly that for this approach to work, no office could be closed part time. The CB agreed that for now this will not happen. Of course, NWSEO reserves the right to negotiate any future changes in the proposal. We look forward to having a voice in the development of this idea. We also want to carefully review any proposal for a prototype of this plan, to bargain over the impact and implementation of any prototype. We also reserve the right to later negotiate over the implementation of whatever NWS-wide plan arises out of the prototype. But the idea looks solid, and we feel we can support this new design.

The IT Tiger Team proposal calls for an additional six full time employees (FTE's) and includes a promise that no field office Information Technology Specialist (ITO) positions will be eliminated. The implementation team will be charged with ensuring that the IT system to be developed is responsive to the needs of the field, such as changes in software configuration and the addition of new products. This includes the ability for field offices to make adjustments to their programs and procedures to fulfill local needs. Once again, we want to see the final proposal. As long as the proposal specifically states this is a *one time* consolidation (we maintain our right to bargain over any additional consolidation steps) of the WAN, security, Internet servers, desktop management and IT procurement, then negotiations if any, should be smooth. However, if the proposal includes items like the consolidation of LAN management in the LOC, consolidation of applications into fewer numbers of servers (or server clusters), or establishes regional teams for application development and regional support, then there will be opposition from NWSEO.

NWSEO previously announced its opposition to most of the recommendations of the Aviation team – particularly those involving the consolidation of TAF preparation. I am glad to report that the Aviation Team’s recommendations were not adopted by the CB. Instead, the CB focused its attention on the Aviation team’s proposal to prototype an *enhanced CWSU* program.

As you may know, the FAA sent the NWS a letter stating that they are going to cut funding for the CWSU program by 20% and wanted the NWS to cut 20% of the positions at the CWSU offices. The FAA included an untenable requirement that despite these cutbacks, the FAA wants the CWSU’s to be a 24/7 operation. It is easy to see that you cannot run 21 CWSU’s on a 24/7 operational schedule with a 20% reduction in staff and funding.

NWS will make three proposals to the FAA. First, for a small amount more, the FAA can have all or some subset of CWSU’s open 24/7 with better services at *all ARTCC’s*. Second, if the FAA insists on the 20% funding cut, they can have some CWSU’s open 24/7 but others would have no onsite meteorologists. The third proposal would be that no CWSU’s will have onsite meteorologists, and the entire CWSU function will come from the WFO’s. In all three proposals, the WFO’s retain control of the TAF’s and TWEB’s. I want to see the final proposals for prototyping the *enhanced CWSU’s* prior to lending support to this idea.

The agency has few options here as the FAA is paying for the program. I strongly believe that the best option is for a meteorological presence at all ARTCC’s and a subset of those CWSU’s being 24/7 but also recognize the reality that the NWS must be prepared for doing the job with less people and funding. I am prepared to use all resources available to convince the FAA to put safety first in making this funding allocation.

The meeting ended on a positive note, and I’m convinced that the NWSEO and NWS can work together to build a brighter future for the organization.

Fraternally,
Dan Sobien
National President