



For immediate release

Contact: Richard Hirn 202-255-3141

Dan Sobien 202-420-1043

(Washington DC – February 1, 2019) A Federal Labor Arbitrator ruled today that the National Weather Service violated the collective bargaining agreement with its employee union when the agency reduced the hours of operation at five Weather Service Offices in Alaska, Cold Bay, McGrath, Yakutat, Annette, and St. Paul, in August 2016. Arbitrator John Paul Simpkins ordered the NWS to restore 16 hour-a-day operations at these offices, and directed the NWS to pay the affected employees the lost overtime that they had been working to keep the offices open 16 hours a day. The employees' union, the National Weather Service Employees Organization estimates that the back pay exceeds \$500,000.

The NWS has been criticized by the meteorology community for reducing the hours of operations at these offices because it has resulted in a loss of weather data, obtained through weather balloon launches from these offices, that feeds into the computer models that provide forecast for not only Alaska but for the lower 48 states.