

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE POLICY DIRECTIVE 10-20
AUGUST 30, 2004***

***Operations and Services
FORENSIC SERVICES***

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

OPR: W/OS23 (M. Andrews)

Certified by: W/OS (G. Mandt)

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWS Policy Directive 10-20, dated September 17, 2003. Appendix A has been deleted; it contained terms not used in this policy directive. Section 4 (four) is changed to reflect measurement of customer satisfaction with provided documentation services.

1. This policy directive governs National Weather Service (NWS) activities supporting weather-related accident investigations and litigation. Weather is a factor in a substantial number of transportation-related accidents. These accidents are routinely investigated by Government agencies having legal responsibility to determine probable cause and make safety recommendations. The Government may become a party in litigation arising from transportation accidents.
2. The objective of NWS Forensic Services is to provide effective and timely weather support to Government agencies and offices involved in accident investigation and litigation, and provide dependable and timely weather documentation services in response to mission information requests.
3. This directive establishes the following authorities and responsibilities:
 - 3.1 NWS Forensic Services will ensure the program is consistent with the NWS mission and Department of Commerce and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) policy.
 - 3.2 The Office of Climate, Water, and Weather Services (OCWWS) is responsible for the overall management of Forensic Services. This includes:
 - a. Preparing procedural directives consistent with this policy directive.
 - b. Maintaining an awareness of all investigative and legal activity concerning weather related aviation and marine accidents.
 - c. Maintaining an efficient and timely accident notification process within the NWS.
 - d. Providing assistance to and participating in weather-related transportation accident investigations conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board

(NTSB) and other Government accident investigation offices.

- e. Providing assistance and technical advice to Government attorneys in legal cases arising from weather-related accidents.
- f. Assisting in the preparation of NWS employees required to testify at Public Hearings convened by the NTSB, Federal Aviation Administration, or Coast Guard; and at legal proceedings (e.g., deposition or trial).
- g. Working with the appropriate NOAA offices to ensure the maintenance of a weather records retention system which meets the needs of the accident investigation/legal community.
- h. Responding to legal production, Freedom of Information Act, and mission information requests for weather records requested by Government attorneys and accident investigation offices; and by private attorneys, consultants, and the general public.

3.3 NWS Regional Headquarters will provide the required assistance, cooperation and resources to effectively discharge the accident investigation/litigation support responsibilities as detailed in section 3.2.

4. The NWS measures the effectiveness of the Forensic Program by assessing customer satisfaction with provided weather documentation services.

5. Procedural directives will be issued to implement this policy as needed and determined by the Director, OCWWS.

SIGNED BY

August 16, 2004

Brigadier General David L. Johnson, USAF, Ret. Date
Assistant Administrator for Weather Services