

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-104

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Operations & Services

NWS Requirements, Operations and Services Improvements NWSPD 10-1

**PREPARATIONS IN ADVANCE OF, OR DURING, DISASTERS OR MAJOR WEATHER
EMERGENCIES**

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SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This directive supersedes NWSI 10-104, “*Preparation in Advance of or During Disasters or Major Weather Emergencies*”, dated November 10, 2014. Changes made to reflect the NWS Headquarters reorganization effective April 1, 2015.

- Update made: Page 3, 2.2 “see Appendix A” removed and replaced with link to NOAA Travel Regulation on evacuation travel allowances.

Signed

January 23, 2017

John E. Potts
Chief Financial Officer/
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Date

Preparation in Advance of, or During, Disasters or Major Weather Emergencies

<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Introduction	2
2. Evacuation of Non-Emergency Personnel and Dependents.....	2
2.1 Advance Preparations	3
2.2 Use of Evacuation Pay.....	3
2.3 Administrative Leave	3
3. Advance Planning.	3
3.1 Continuity of Service and Backup	4
3.2 Consideration of Office Capacities.....	4
3.3 Staffing Considerations.....	4
4. Discretion.....	4

1. Introduction. The purpose of this instruction is to set forth procedures to: ensure the safety of National Weather Service (NWS) employees and their dependents during disasters or major weather emergencies; reduce the potential hardships experienced by employees and dependents; and facilitate the evacuation of non-emergency personnel and dependents. This instruction uses the same criteria for defining disasters or major weather emergencies as established under NWS Instruction 1-208, Delegation of Authority for Food/Lodging Expenditures In Advance of or During Major Weather Emergencies or Disasters: “The emergency involves danger to human life or the possibility of destruction of Federal property.”

This policy covers all operational units involved in the provision of warning and forecast services and data collection and dissemination. The NWS officials in charge of these units (e.g. Meteorologist in Charge for WFO) will herein be referred to as “office managers”.

2. Evacuation of Non-emergency Personnel and Dependents:

2.1 Advance Preparations. Employees should make every effort prior to a major weather emergency or disaster to secure their residence/property and to be prepared to evacuate their dependents when directed by local authorities.

- a. Employees are encouraged to have established family evacuation plans in place, including arrangements with friends or relatives outside the immediate service area for temporary residence, if feasible.
- b. Non-emergency employees should plan to evacuate with their family and/or relocate to an appropriate backup office site as may be required by the NWS Region or FMC Director.
- c. Use of evacuation pay and administrative leave is encouraged to ensure the safety of employees and their dependents. See sections 2.2 and 2.3, below.

2.2. Use of Evacuation Pay. When mandatory evacuation orders are in place, NWS employees and their dependents should follow National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) implementing procedures for the use of evacuation pay to assist their safe and efficient evacuation. Evacuation pay can be used by an employee's dependents, even if evacuating without the employee. See NOAA Travel regulation Chapter 301-Travel Allowances, Part 301-32. [NTR Chapter 301.32 Evacuation Travel Allowances](#)

2.3. Administrative Leave. The office manager or designee, working in coordination with the FMC Director or designee, is encouraged to grant administrative leave as necessary to provide NWS employees sufficient time to make required preparations for evacuation or to secure their residence/property in advance of, or during, a major event. Administrative leave can be granted in conjunction with, or separate from, evacuation pay. See Appendix A

3. Advance Planning. The following guidance does not supersede existing NWS Continuity of Operations policy (NWS instruction 10-2202, "Operations and Services Readiness – Continuity of Operations"). The intent of this guidance is to supplement the COOP instructions and to promulgate best practices: Offices should establish facility-specific operations contingency plans for major weather emergencies or disasters. These plans should be reviewed annually and filed with the FMC. The plans should address staffing, operations, and backup and take into consideration specific actions for anticipated events with differing onset, durations, and impacts. For example, a plan for a Category 2 hurricane would be different than a plan for a Category 5 hurricane. The establishment of, and subsequent changes to the plans must be implemented in accordance with the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the NWS Employees Organization (NWSEO).

3.1 Continuity of Service and Backup.

National and Regional Headquarters shall:

- a. Provide operational, logistical, and/or technological assistance prior to the onset of extreme conditions (This assistance could include, for example, repair of equipment, delivery of satellite phones, augmentation of staff, etc.).
- b. Provide assistance in maintaining NWS operations (For example, facilitate transfer of services to a neighboring office(s), assist with deployment of staff to a neighboring office(s), etc.).

WFO/RFCs/WSOs/CWSUs/Offices/Centers will:

- a. Maintain delivery of services as long as feasible (Complete infrastructure failure or damage may prevent continued operation and require service backup.)
- b. Provide staffing (local expertise) to a neighboring office(s) to maintain delivery of services (if necessary).
- c. Coordinate among adjacent and or backup offices to ensure integrated evacuation and continuity planning.
- d. To the maximum extent possible, provide for the safety of the employees.

3.2 Consideration of Office Capacities: Office managers should take into consideration the amount of space available in the office/center safe room as well as the overall work load of the office when deciding upon how many emergency staff to retain during the duration of a disaster or major weather emergency. This consideration will help avoid overcrowding or additional hardship or injury. This information is available through each Region's Systems Operations Division and or the NWS Office of Operational Systems.

3.3 Staffing Considerations. Prior to an anticipated prolonged event (for example, a major land falling hurricane with significant infrastructure damage possible in the immediate area where the office/center is located), office managers should evaluate whether to draw down staff to a level that will balance employee safety with the need to maintain NWS services. Additional deployment of staff to backup offices prior to such an event should be considered to provide local expertise and ensure continuity of services.

4. Discretion. Policy and instructions cannot cover every conceivable scenario. Office managers are expected to use their best judgment in making decisions regarding how to maintain the provision of NWS mission responsibilities while protecting the safety of NWS employees and their dependents. Office managers, time permitting, will document the basis for his/her decisions and seek authority from the FMC Director, as appropriate.