

CHAPTER 1

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COOPERATING AGENCIES

1.1. General

Cooperation and communication among agencies that provide essential meteorological data, information, and dissemination services are the bases for ensuring that users receive the best possible warnings and forecasts of severe local storms. This coordination is achieved through the activities of the Committee for Environmental Services, Operations, and Research Needs (C/ESORN) and the Joint Action Group for Severe Local Storms Operations (JAG/SLSO) in the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research (OFCM). The responsible Federal departments and agencies who have promulgated the National Severe Local Storms Operations Plan (NSLSOP) have agreed to arrangements to promote the most effective use of their weather-related assets with respect to severe local storm operations. Between major revisions to this plan, changes will be promulgated by a Change Notice. Once received, the changes should be made to the plan and noted in the Change and Review Log on page iv.

1.2. Scope

The procedures and agreements contained herein apply to all of the 50 United States and the U.S. Territories of Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam. The plan defines the roles of the individual agencies participating in the severe local storm warning service when more than one agency is involved in the delivery of service in a specific area. When a single agency is involved in any specific area, that agency's procedures should be contained in internal documents and, to the extent possible, be consistent with the NSLSOP practices and procedures.

1.3. Department of Commerce (DOC) Responsibilities

The DOC, through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is charged with the overall responsibility to implement a responsive, effective national severe local storms warning service.

1.3.1. National Weather Service (NWS)

The NWS will provide timely dissemination of forecasts, warnings, and all significant information regarding severe local storms to the appropriate agencies, marine and aviation interests, and the general public. Specifically, NWS will provide the following:

- Basic surface, upper air, buoy, and radar observations from its network of observing sites
- Additional observations, when required; these observations will be transmitted to any requesting agency by the appropriate communications technologies

- Basic analyses, forecast charts, and radio facsimile charts through the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP) Central Operations (NCO), Camp Springs, Maryland
- Severe Local Storm Outlooks and Watch Bulletins through the NCEP Storm Prediction Center (SPC), Norman, Oklahoma
- Dissemination of severe weather and flash flood warnings and statements issued by Weather Forecast Offices (WFO) throughout the United States
- Aviation In-flight Weather Advisories issued through the NCEP Aviation Weather Center (AWC) with aviation responsibilities for periods up to 6 hours for aircraft (civilian and military) and amendments, as appropriate
- A concerted effort to collect and relay Pilot Reports (PIREP) in conjunction with the FAA
- Appropriate public educational materials, concerning the severe local storms/flash flood watch/warning service, and development of community preparedness plans
- Points of contact from SPC and AWC to coordinate with Air Force Weather Agency (AFWA) on backup

1.3.2. National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS)

NESDIS will provide the following services:

- Operate satellite systems capable of providing coverage of selected portions of the United States and adjoining coastal areas
- Receive and respond to requests for coverage of specific areas and times. These requests may come from NCEP, a WFO, or appropriate USAF stations through the NCEP Senior Duty Meteorologist (SDM) in NCO and the NESDIS Satellite Analysis Branch (SAB), according to the NESDIS/NWS Satellite Schedule Coordination and Dissemination Procedures (August 2000).
- Provide appropriate satellite data to authorized research facilities
- Provide multidisciplinary environmental analyses to support disaster mitigation and warning services for U.S. Federal agencies and the international community

1.4. Department of Defense (DOD) Responsibilities

1.4.1. U. S. Air Force (USAF)

Air Force Weather (AFW) is responsible for providing weather support to the USAF, U.S. Army, the Air and Army National Guard, the Air Force and Army Reserve, and other DOD customers throughout the world. AFW will provide the following information and services:

- Basic surface, upper-air, and radar observations from its network of stations making such observations
- Additional observations when required and will make selective, nonsensitive reports available to civilian agencies through existing communications with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) or, with prior approval, through direct DOD communications
- A concerted effort to collect and relay all pilot reports (PIREPs)
- Transmission of NWS products for severe weather to Continental U.S. (CONUS) DOD agencies via the USAF communications system
- Through AFWA at Offutt Air Force Base (AFB), Nebraska:
 - Mesoscale model backup to NCEP's NCO during emergency situations, when requested
 - Immediate operations backup to NCEP (SPC and AWC) during emergency situations
- Through Operational Weather Squadrons (OWS) at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana; Scott AFB, Illinois; Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona; and Hickam AFB, Hawaii; provide weather watch, warning, and advisories for all Air Force and Army installations, including Air and Army National Guard and Air Force and Army Reserve forces in their assigned areas of responsibility

1.4.2 U. S. Army

The active, national guard, and reserve components of the Army rely on the responsible AFW OWS as their primary weather provider, with backup from another OWS. Within the CONUS, the Army will rely on SPC and NWS severe weather products and NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) when its assigned OWS and back-up agencies are unable to provide the support.

1.4.3 U. S. Navy (USN) and U. S. Marine Corps (USMC)

The USN and USMC Meteorological and Oceanographic (METOC) Forecast Centers provide severe local storm warnings in support of the Department of the Navy. Within the conterminous United States and offshore waters, requirements for early warnings of hazardous flying conditions and local destructive phenomena are met by using NWS, AFWA, and Fleet Numerical Meteorology and Oceanography Center (FNMOC) products interpreted by personnel

of the Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command (NAVMETOCCOM) and the Marine Corps METOC Service units. Full use is made of information received from NOAA dissemination sources, as well as other military and civil weather circuits. USN and USMC METOC units will provide the following information and services:

- Basic surface, upper-air, and radar observations, including those taken at sea, from its worldwide network of stations making such observations
- Additional observations when required and make all such reports available to civil agencies through existing communications with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) or, with prior approval, through direct DOD communications
- A concerted effort to collect and relay PIREPs
- Limited backup of NCO through FNMOC

1.5 Department of Transportation (DOT) Responsibilities

1.5.1 FAA

The FAA will provide the following information and services:

- Basic surface weather observations from its network of observing sites and radar data, per triagency agreement
- Pre-flight and in-flight pilot weather briefings, within designated airspace, which include Airmen's Meteorological Information (AIRMET), Significant Meteorological Information (SIGMET), Convective SIGMETs, urgent pilot reports (UUA), and Center Weather Advisories (CWA) to pilots on a routine basis
- Dissemination/broadcast of AIRMETs, SIGMETs, Convective SIGMETs, UUAs, CWAs, and other hazardous weather advisories via voice and recorded broadcasts

FAA dissemination broadcasts include the Hazardous In-flight Weather Advisory Service (HIWAS), which is a recorded broadcast available on certain air-to-ground frequencies. HIWAS is updated when conditions warrant. Air traffic controllers advise pilots to monitor HIWAS by broadcasting a HIWAS Alert when the HIWAS has been updated. Other broadcasts include the Transcribed Weather Broadcasts (TWEB) for Alaska, the Telephone Information Broadcast (TIBS), and the VOLMET (meteorological information for aircraft in flight) broadcast for international flights entering U.S. domestic airspace.

1.5.2 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

The FHWA will provide the following services:

- Assist in making use of Intelligent Transportation Systems as a means of disseminating severe local storm information to both transportation managers and road users

- Work towards assimilating Road Weather observations into the broader weather observation networks
- Work with vehicle manufacturers and others to explore the collection of surface observations from mobile sources (e.g., cars and trucks)

1.6 Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

1.6.1 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Responsibilities

FEMA will provide the following services:

- Develop and maintain communications systems in partnership with NWS to ensure that the emergency management community is provided with access to needed NWS products at no recurring cost
- Operate an interstate hot line telephone system (National Warning System [NAWAS]) that connects FEMA Warning Points and NWS Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs)
- Revise and update a Hazard U.S.-Multi Hazard HAZUS-MH model that can estimate risk, damage, and losses for earthquakes, floods, and hurricane winds, both on an annualized loss basis and on a deterministic basis. (See http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/hazus/hz_models.shtm)

1.6.2 U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)

The USCG will provide the following capabilities and services:

- Communications circuits for relay of weather observations to NWS in selected areas
- Coastal broadcast facilities at selected locations for weather forecasts, watches, and warnings
- Personnel, vessel, and communications support to the National Data Buoy Center (NDBC) for development, deployment, and operation of moored environmental data buoy systems
- Surface observations to NWS from its coastal facilities and vessels

1.7 Department of Energy (DOE) Responsibilities

Other than forwarding surface observations to appropriate points of contact during a severe storm, DOE and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) do not have the capability to provide forecasts or warnings to others. The DOE and NNSA sites/facilities rely on the NWS for forecasts, warnings, and all significant information regarding severe local storms.

DOE and NNSA may provide resources, assets, personnel, and expertise to others following a severe local storm either through the DOE Emergency Assistance Program or through an Energy Emergency response (per DOE Order 151. 1C). These activities may be initiated to support interagency plans; Presidential direction; or State, local, or tribal agreements of mutual aid.

In the event of a severe storm at a DOE or NNSA site, DOE may activate its Headquarters Emergency Operations Center to receive, coordinate, and disseminate emergency information to the White House, other Federal agencies, and other appropriate emergency points of contact.

1.8 Department of the Interior (DOI) Responsibilities

The U.S. Geological Survey will provide water-level and stream-flow data on a near-real-time basis to NWS River Forecast Centers for issuing flash flood warnings at locations throughout the United States.

1.9 Exchange of Data, Products, and Forecasting Techniques between Agencies

There will be a mutual exchange of relevant data and products on the part of all concerned agencies outlined in Chapter 1. SPC and AFWA are the units responsible for preparing centralized severe weather forecasts. These forecast products will be exchanged between them, since AFWA provides limited backup for SPC. The National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL), SPC, and NESDIS are actively engaged in developing objective severe weather forecasting and analysis techniques. These organizations will engage, whenever possible, in a joint technique development program and will exchange any objective techniques developed.