

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE WESTERN REGION SUPPLEMENT 14-2003
TO INSTRUCTION 10-503
FEBRUARY 18, 2005***

***Operations and Services
General Public Weather Services, NWSPD 10-5
Prioritizing Products and Workload Activities, NWSI 10-503***

***PRIORITIZING PRODUCTS AND WORKLOAD ACTIVITIES FOR WESTERN
REGION FORECAST OFFICES (WFOs)***

OPR: W/WR1x1 (C. Gorski)
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Certified by: W/WR1 (R. Douglas)

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Signed

02/04/05

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Date

Director, Western Region

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1. Description: This Supplement provides guidance for prioritizing hydro-meteorological products and activities associated with the preparation and dissemination of those products at National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs). This guidance applies to both *normal* operations and during back-up.

Forecasters must use sound professional judgment in prioritizing warnings, watches, statements, forecasts, and preparation of gridded fields of meteorological parameters as they impact the NWS mission of protecting life and property. Since written instructions cannot address every situation, operational personnel must exercise initiative and good professional judgment to minimize the risk to public safety. **Protection of life and property takes precedence in all situations.**

2. Instructions: To assist WFOs in prioritizing office duties including public, river, aviation, marine, and fire weather, the following is guidance for warnings, watches, and other products that have priority. WFOs may expand upon this guidance to incorporate guidelines which meet unique local requirements, as appropriate.

2.1 Role of WFO Management and Lead Forecasters: WFO management and senior forecasters will remain mindful of the need to pro actively augment WFO staffing before and during major weather events/severe weather/fire outbreaks in their County Warning and Forecast Area. Each WFO will have a Severe Weather Operations Plan which identifies realistic staffing levels necessary to perform the work required by a severe weather/flood/fire outbreak. The senior forecaster is responsible for determining work assignments assigned to his/her shift. This includes, in addition to augmenting staffing for severe weather or during times of increased workload and reallocating work assignments during benign weather and/or decreased workload. During benign weather lead forecasters shall ensure staff resources are utilized in the most efficient manner. This will often mean taking actions to free up time for shift workers to work on training, research, and/or focal point duties through re-assignment of duties.

Products and associated support activities have been subdivided into three categories. Time sensitivity was taken into consideration as to the products ranking. Individual circumstances may change the ranking or category of products.

CATEGORY ONE PRIORITY: These products are considered critical to saving lives and property. They will be prepared and disseminated as quickly and accurately as possible. Overtime is authorized for their preparation and dissemination.

CATEGORY TWO PRIORITY: These products should not be delayed for more than one hour. Overtime is authorized to avoid excessive delays in their preparation and dissemination.

CATEGORY THREE PRIORITY: These are products that can be delayed until all higher priority products have been issued. When these products cannot be issued in a timely manner, the product header should be transmitted with the message that the PRODUCT IS DELAYED - ESTIMATED TIME OF NEXT ISSUANCE IS xx A.M./P.M. Note: this will not be possible for TWEBS, and does not apply to preparation of grids via the Graphical Forecast Editor (GFE). Overtime is not authorized.

Prioritization of services and activities associated with the preparation and dissemination of a product are ranked the same as the product. For example, collecting or making calls to spotters associated with a severe thunderstorm and dissemination of the severe thunderstorm warning have the same priority with regard to services and activities as the severe thunderstorm warning. The product list is generic in nature and is not an attempt to categorize all NWS generated services.

2.2 Category One Priority: The following products and services are deemed critical to saving lives and property. In the event two or more priority one products are required, the order of completion will depend upon which event presents the greatest risk to life and property. For example a spot forecast for an emerging wildfire which threatens an urban wildland interface may present a higher risk of threat to life than a severe thunderstorm with 3/4" hail, and hence, the spot should be issued first.

Forecasters must exercise judgement when determining the order of which category one products are accomplished first. Accordingly the following category one products are NOT listed in order of priority.

- a. Short-fused warnings [flash flood, tornado, severe thunderstorm, red flag (short-fused events), airport weather warnings, special marine warnings, urban and small stream advisories] and appropriate follow-up statements to these products including follow up short-term forecasts (NOWs).
- b. Amending Terminal Aviation Forecasts (TAFs) in deteriorating weather situations.
- c. Issuing spot forecasts for wildfires during red flag conditions or highly erratic/critical fire weather conditions.
- d. Issuing spot forecasts for Hazmat incidents or search and rescue operations.

- e. Issuing tornado, severe thunderstorm, flash flood watches and fire weather watches for dry thunderstorms.
- f. Issuing long-fused warnings (winter weather, non-precipitation, river, red flag (long fused), storm/gale/small craft advisories, coastal flood warnings.) Note: This may require preparation of a Hazard Grid to generate a text product via IFPS.
- g. Providing updated Quantitative Precipitation Forecast (QPF) during periods of flooding or potential flooding.

2.3 Category Two Priority: **Not listed in order of priority.**

- a. Amending TWEBS for deteriorating conditions.
- b. Issuing long-fused watches (winter weather, non-precipitation, river, fire weather watches, coastal flood watches).
- c. Preparation of grids from IFPS. Grids prepared via IFPS should be monitored and “kept current” round-the-clock as new forecast information becomes available and is analyzed. Accordingly, this activity can be temporarily suspended for short periods of time to allow for issuance of higher priority products. WFOs dealing with major outbreaks of severe weather/floods/fires are encouraged to request their back-up offices to monitor and change their grids, as appropriate.
- d. Amending TAFs for improving conditions.
- e. Issuing scheduled TAFs.
- f. Issuing spot forecasts for ongoing wildfires under stable fire weather conditions.
- g. Issuing scheduled or updating public/marine/fire weather/routine QPF forecasts.
- h. Issuing event-driven NOWs during less critical weather than in short- fused warning situations, e.g., as in category one.
- i. Issuing river statements and outlooks used for the purpose of relaying critical flow information.

2.4 Category Three Priority:

- a. Amending TWEBS for improving conditions.
- b. Issuing scheduled TWEBS.

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- c. Issuing spot forecasts for prescribed fire. (Spot forecast for prescribed fire may have a higher ranking if requesting fire agency is paying overtime specifically to handle increased spot forecast workloads.)
- d. Issuing state forecasts (SFT/P).
- e. Issuing area forecast discussions (AFD).
- f. Issuing site-specific forecasts for land management activities such as spray projects, aerial surveys, etc.
- g. Issuing daily river statements and outlooks used for informational or for recreational purposes.
- h. Preparing climate summaries, temperature tables, etc.
- i. Answering media calls.
- j. Issuing drought information statements.

Note: WFOs with two “additional” positions to support fire weather enable such WFOs to staff fire weather shifts during the wildfire season. Accordingly, any category two or three product(s) routinely assigned to the fire weather shift are secondary in priority to fire weather products.